





# BRAHMARSHI KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

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BY

**MANILAL C. PAREKH, B.A.**

*Yesudasnanudas, Hindu Khristarthi Satsang*

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**To**  
**That ever-increasing number of people**  
**Who begin to believe Christ Jesus to be the fulfilment**  
**of all that is good and true and noble in**  
**Hinduism**  
**and who thus form the Hindu Church of Christ**  
**in Hindustan,**  
**this work**  
**is lovingly and reverently inscribed.**



## PREFACE

This book is neither a history, nor a biography of Keshub Chunder Sen. It is more than anything else the *Memorabilia* of this Brahmarshi of New India, and as such it needs no apology for the large number of extracts, mostly from his speeches and writings it contains. They are of the essence of the book. To use a well-known figure, they are like pearls in a necklace, the beauty whereof is solely due to them. All that I have done is to gather these from various quarters, well-known and obscure, and link them together. I have done this keeping in view their natural order, for there is a link, a continuity, even an organic growth in all the thoughts and words of Keshub Chunder Sen. Extremely delicate and therefore difficult as this task of tracing the growth of such a spiritual genius as Keshub is, I have been constrained to take it up because these *Memorabilia* have been to me of supreme auto-biographical interest. They have moulded my mind and nourished my spirit. They completely represented my spiritual position for more than a decade while I was a member of the New Dispensation Church. Whatever little criticism is in the book is from the point of view of the orthodox Christian Faith, to which I have advanced while going along the lines laid down by Keshub. Ever since I came to know him through his writings nearly twenty years ago, he pointed out Another, far greater than himself, even Jesus Christ who increased more and more from that moment, and at last a moment came when, the blindness of my unbelief vanishing, I could not but call him "my Lord and my God." Thus while Keshub has been my *guru*, Jesus Christ has been my God. To me at least Keshub has been what John the Baptist was to the first disciples of Jesus, and the present work is a humble tribute to his precious memory which I cherish even now and shall continue to cherish all my life with deep love and gratitude.

Another motive, though of a very minor kind, which has led me to let Keshub speak for himself as much as possible is derived from the fact that there are few men of modern times who have been so misunderstood and misrepresented as he was in his own life time and is even now. He was nearly a century ahead of his time. The height of his offence was that where others saw discord he saw concord: where others saw differences he saw the unity underlying them. He was too Christian for Hindus, and too Hindu for Christians, and so both these people stumbled at his teaching. A large part of the Brahma Samaj was too rational to understand him while he was living, and much of the worst opposition he had to encounter in his own days and which followed him even after his death came from those who were at one time his followers. His own disciples have been too much concerned since his death with the work of deifying him to be able to understand the true nature of his work. In one of his earliest productions, viz. "True Faith," with prophetic insight he traced the laws of the life of faith, and what he said about 'the phenomena of persecution and deification' being 'essentially one and betraying the same ignorance' of faith has literally happened in his own case.

To this many-sided misunderstanding a contribution almost fatal, has been made from a quarter from where it was least expected. This is from no less a man than Dr. Farquhar. Perhaps of all men he was the most fitted to understand and interpret Keshub Chunder Sen to the public mind in a proper manner, for the very idea which is so closely associated with his name viz. Christ, the Crown of Hinduism, was given a very rich expression to by Keshub nearly half a century back, not merely by word or pen but in the life of an organized Church. All his life Keshub was engaged in this great task, which may be said to be the only mission of his life. Even now, and in spite of his incomplete view of Christ, it remains true that no one

has done more than he by way of uniting Christ and Hinduism not only in himself but in his Church also.

But still there is hardly any mention of this in Dr. Farquhar's "Crown of Hinduism." This is not all. It is only negative. In his positive statements on Keshub in his book "Modern Religious Movements in India," Dr. Farquhar reaches the climax of all the misunderstandings about Keshub. He devotes nearly thirty pages of this book to him and about the end he says as follows:—

"He then sets himself on a level with Christ."

"If Christ was the centre of his Dispensation, am I not the centre of this?"

"And immediately after this there follows this most touching piece of self-humiliation."

Here follows a long quotation from the same lecture by Keshub.

Now the context from which the above-mentioned statement of Keshub is taken stands thus:—

"In spite of reiterated remonstrances, it has been whispered already that we are trying, not to glorify the Dispensation, but to glorify ourselves. If Christ was the centre of his Dispensation, am I not the centre of this? *Ungenerous and untruthful critics have insinuated that as Jesus claimed to be the king of the Jews, so I am ambitious of being honoured as the king of the Indians, or the Bengalis at any rate. It is certainly not fair or kind of our critics to say so.*"

The lines italicized here occur just before the passage quoted by Dr. Farquhar, a passage which he says follows "immediately after" the first statement.

Not only this. Immediately after this long passage quoted by Dr. Farquhar there occur these words:—

"Fear not then, my friend, that a man of conscious sin, one so vile in his own estimation, will covet

high prophetic honours. I can assure you that I have done, and will do, all in my power to suppress this hideous lie which would rank me with Jesus and other prophets. If I really meant to be a prophet, I would try another Dispensation where I could find scope for my ambition, another Church where I could establish my mediatorial position and authority."

There are other passages also to the same effect, and still Dr. Farquhar has held him up as saying that he claims to be the centre of the New Dispensation, and that he sets himself on a level with Christ.

This is not all. Not only Keshub does not speak of himself as the centre as Dr. Farquhar wrongly alleges, but he, positively and at great length, shows Christ to be the centre of his Church in his last lecture "Asia's Message to Europe." No comment is necessary on such a misrepresentation as this, one of the grossest of its kind. Suffice it to say here that thousands upon thousands in India and elsewhere have derived their only knowledge of Keshub from this and thus have started with a prejudice against him. Thus not only much injustice is done to Keshub but a distinct disservice has been rendered to the Kingdom of Christ. If the publication of this book helps to any extent in the proper understanding of this servant of God, one of the greatest men of modern times, I shall consider myself fortunate indeed.

I must acknowledge here my debt of gratitude to the Rev. R. B. Douglas of the Scottish Free Church Mission, Bombay, for giving me very valuable help in the preparation of my MS, for the press.

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MANILAL C. PAREKH.

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**KESHUB WITH EKTARA.**

# KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.

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## CHAPTER I.

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### BIRTH AND EARLY INFLUENCE.

Keshub Chunder Sen was born in Calcutta in 1838 in a noted family belonging to the Vaidya caste and of the Vaishnav sect. His grandfather was Ram Kamal Sen, who was one of the very first fruits, not of English education, but of the contact of the Hindu with the European civilization as it was now and then represented by some really excellent men in the first quarter of the last century. Ram Kamal Sen belonged to the same group of men as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Raja Radha Kanta Dev, etc., and thus had the privilege of being one of those self-made men who are the very salt of a nation or a people. He had risen by the sheer force of his character and industry from the post of a petty compositor earning eight rupees a month to that of the Dewanship of the Bank of Bengal with an income of two thousand a month. But this was not all. He did in those early days a great deal of literary work also and found time to compile a voluminous dictionary in English and Bengali. He had many other activities also. Besides, he was a religious man, though his religion was not of the same type as that of Ram Mohun Roy. As the grandson of such a man, Keshub lacked neither wealth, nor high social position, nor refinement of culture, nor even a really religious atmosphere. The discerning eye of the aged and experienced Ram Kamal Sen could not fail

to see that the little child was extraordinary, and he was known to have said that he alone "would be able to sustain the family reputation." Although Keshub had the misfortune to lose both his grandfather and father in his childhood, the latter of whom died comparatively young, the example of such a grandfather could not but wield a great influence upon the mind of such a sensitive and impressionable boy as Keshub was.

Whatever else he may have missed through these early bereavements was more than made up by his mother, who has been said by almost every one who came to know her intimately, to have been a most uncommon woman. From all she commanded universal reverence, a reverence surpassed only by that paid to her son. This was due above all to her innate goodness, and much of the greatness of Keshub has been traced to this goodness which was transmitted to her son. Reduced to a subordinate position in the family as well as a widow from her early youth, she found ample scope therein to practise those domestic virtues which have been the glory of Hindu womanhood, and much more of Hindu widowhood, and it was probably in this little domestic school that Keshub learnt much of what served him as the foundation of his life and work.

Besides thus inheriting and learning all that he may have done from his parents and grandfather, Keshub was endowed with a great deal of natural intelligence, force of character and a strong individuality. Whether in the games he played with his companions whom he always led, or in his studies wherein he did not fail to shine, or in his general

behaviour, Keshub was marked out even from his early boyhood as a peculiar boy, whom if it was not always easy for his companions to love, it was impossible not to respect.

As regards his education, although he never took any university degree, he made such good use of his time while in college as to secure that modicum of mental and moral philosophy, which served him ever after as a philosophical basis for his religious teachings. He devoted himself to the study of the wholesome Scottish school of philosophy, above all of the sound works of Sir William Hamilton whom he greatly admired. He learnt also a great deal from the eclectic French Philosopher Victor Cousin, whose influence remained with him till the end. Besides these philosophical studies, he devoted himself to the study of general literature in its more serious forms, reading such authors as Carlyle and Emerson with much benefit to himself. Though not a student of poetry as such, he liked Shakespeare, more perhaps for his great wisdom, and conceived such admiration for him that he went, when in England, to Stratford-on-Avon, the home of Shakespeare, as if it were on a pilgrimage. He used to quote often the famous adage that "with the Bible and Shakespeare a man is above the world." Although he disliked the dramatic representations of his day, he went the length of representing the drama of Hamlet, himself playing the part of Hamlet, with whose melancholy he may have sympathized, and with whom he had much in common at this stage of life.

In addition to all these philosophic writers and authors, he made a special study of such pronouncedly



theistic authors as Miss Cobbe and Theodora Parker, and, if not at this time, perhaps a little later, of Francis Newman, all of whom helped him to systematize his thoughts into a coherent whole. With both Miss Cobbe and Francis Newman he in course of time even established a correspondence, and cultivated their friendship further when he went to England.

The names of all these authors and writers, great indeed in the world of literature and philosophy, are sufficient to show that Keshub, while he was in his teens, had taken for himself no mean guides, and that he was possessed of a mental and moral earnestness which few, especially, in those days, cared to cultivate, and which would do credit to any boy at any time. But the interest of Keshub at this time, when he was known as a youthful philosopher among his companions, was chiefly intellectual and moral. There was very little in it which was deeply religious or spiritual. The study of Hinduism was at that time almost under a ban among educated young men, and orthodox Christianity too was classed with Hinduism as a superstition and an exploded system. The only evangelical teaching that Keshub had at this time was the reading of the Bible under the Rev. T. H. Burns, Domestic Chaplain to Bishop Cotton, who, to quote P. C. Moozmoodar, was a "devout excellent young man who read the New Testament to us from the Greek." But at this stage of life doctrinal Christianity was far from exercising any great influence over the youthful mind of Keshub. It may have even positively repelled him. Thus though he was far from devoutly or deeply religious at this time, he was intensely moral, and moral austerity

may be said to have been a predominant note of his youthful character. This was more a negative than a positive virtue, and it may best be described by the word "Vairagya." It was something higher than himself which had taken hold of him and was shaping him to ends which neither he nor any one else could foretell. When only fourteen, he gave up fish-eating, the only form of non-vegetarianism practised by the Vaishnavas of Bengal, and avoided, almost from his boyhood, all those frivolities and pleasures, not to speak of evil things, which are common among boys and young men.

Perhaps the origin of this asceticism, which was so uncommon among young people in those days, may be found in the following words that Keshub used in his public lecture, "Am I an Inspired Prophet." Referring to this period of his life, he said:—

"Then what am I, if I am not a prophet? I am a singular man. I am not as ordinary men are, and I say this deliberately. I say this candidly. I am conscious of marked peculiarities in my faith and character. My singularity began when I was fourteen years of age..... What was it that made me so singular in the earlier days of my life? Providence brought me in the presence of three very singular persons in those days. They were among my earliest acquaintances. As I was walking along the path of my life, I met three stately figures, heavenly, majestic and full of divine radiance. And who were these? A wild-looking man, John the Baptist, was seen going about—not exactly in the midst of the gloom of the night but in the morning

twilight—in the wilderness of India, saying “Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” I felt he was speaking to me as I am speaking to you. I confronted his spirit. I heard his voice in the soul.....I fell down, and I learnt contrition and repentance at the feet of John the Baptist.....He passed away, and then came another prophet far greater than he, the prophet of Nazareth. Standing on a high hill, he addressed to me these solemn words, words which were even more touching and thrilling than those of John the Baptist. “Take no thought for your life” said Jesus to me, “what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, or what ye shall put on. Take no thought for the morrow.” These words of Jesus found a lasting lodgment in my heart, and have ever since continued to influence me. Hardly had Jesus finished his words, when there came another prophet and that was the travelled ambassador of Christ, the strong, heroic and valiant apostle Paul. He gave me but one lesson, and that was enough. He said unto me, “Let them that have wives be as though they had none,” and these words came upon me like burning fire at a most critical period of life.”

Thus the spirit of the New Testament, and above all of Christ, had begun to work upon him, though in a negative way, at this early stage of his life, almost from the very first dawn of his religious life. It was that which formed the main inspiration of his life and work, and it was from that that he drew all the dynamic for his work. Whether Keshub was fully

conscious of it or not, the substance of his religion came from the spirit of Christ, and only the form and the setting thereof came from such people as Theodore Parker, Mahārshi Devendra Nath Tagore and others.

There was one thing positive about his religion at this time while he was in his teens, and that was the habit of prayer that he had formed. It was a simple spontaneous thing that had grown in him, and although for years he did not receive any sentimental solace or consolation therefrom, he continued in that habit, which grew year by year to the lasting good of himself, his church and the whole country. In the first chapter of his autobiography, "Jeevan Ved," he says:—

"The first lesson from the scriptures of my life is prayer. When no one helped me, when I did not enter into the membership of any religious society, did not examine the merits of religious systems, or adopt any as my own; when I did not resort to the company of any believers or devotees; in that dawn of my spiritual life, the voice that sounded in my heart was, pray, pray."

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## CHAPTER II.

KESHUB AND MAHARSHI DEVENDRA  
NATH TAGORE.

About this time, when he was nineteen, Keshub joined the Brahma Samaj by signing its covenant privately, having found its principles to agree with those conceptions of religion he had formed for himself. It was thus that he came to know Devendra Nath Tagore who was then at the head of the Brahma Samaj. This contact between these two royal souls, both so alike in so many respects and yet so unlike, like in essentials such as an all-absorbing love for God and perfect consecration to His service, and unlike in age as well as temperament, grew into a friendship, which for the few years that it lasted forms one of the idylls of the Brahma Samaj. It was one of the greatest delights of Devendra Nath to see and commune on matters nearest his heart with this young man, whom Providence had brought to him to partake of his rich spiritual life, and thus to be his spiritual heir and successor. It was a sort of divine fulfillment of the prayers of his heart to have this young man, with all his great enthusiasm and energy, yoked with himself in the vineyard of God doing His work. The whole spirit of Devendra Nath Tagore warmed at the very sight of his young friend, whom he went even to the length of commanding to sit in front of him in the Brahma Mandir at the congregational worship, in order that he himself might pray and preach better. Long hours, very often far into the night, they sat together holding sweet and holy converse, the fatherly spirit of Devendra laying bare all the riches of his heart, revealing the glories of

the spirit world, and the immediate perceptions, visions and whispers of the Supreme Spirit he had so often experienced to the filial spirit of Keshub, who, with a hunger after spiritual things that was all but infinite and omnivorous, must have listened with a rapturous responsiveness that was all his own. Though Keshub formed many long and varied friendships with great and good men both in India and in England, and though the relationships between him and his disciples were deep and profound, it is doubtful if any other of his friendships equalled this in its depth and tenderness or was so far-reaching and fruitful in its effects upon both himself and others. Its effects on the Brahma Samaj may be treated elsewhere. Its effects on himself were manifold and permanent. Above all, it was from Devendra Nath that Keshub learnt that subjective and idealistic theism or Vedantic theism from which he never became entirely free, and which it was his life-long labour and task to reconcile with the Pauranic theism with its constituent elements of Special Providence, Incarnation, etc., a thing of which Devendra Nath was very much afraid, and which was very likely the chief cause of the separation of these two men, who stood for nearly a decade in the spiritual relationship of father and son, teacher and disciple, friend and friend.

Devendra Nath had divined Keshub's powers at this early period of his life as few others had done, and almost from the first had said "Whatever he thinks in his mind, he has the power to express in speech. Whatever he says he has the power to do. Whatever he does, he has the power of making other men do." Pratap Chunder Moozumdar, Keshub's great disciple and biographer, relates how Devendra Nath

after telling the story of Dushyant's surprise at seeing his own son whom he did not recognise playing with lions, added "Brahmanand is but a youth. If such be his power now, what will he be when he fully grows up!"

So great and unprecedented was the progress of the Brahma Samaj in all things within a very short time under the youthful and enthusiastic leadership of Keshub that Devendra Nath, in obedience to an intimation from Heaven that he said he had received, took the unusual course of installing Keshub at the early age of twenty-four and in spite of his non-Brahmin birth, which in itself, was a new departure from the Brahma Samaj of those days, as the Acharya, i.e. the Minister of the Brahma Samaj. He further conferred upon him the title of Brahmanand (Rejoicer in God). Thus was laid the foundation of that great ministry, the effects of which overshadowed the whole land in Keshub's own time, and are yet far from disappearing.

Long after they had separated, there was a correspondence between Moozomdar and the Maharshi in the year 1881, which well brings out the relationship that once existed between Keshub and the Maharshi as well as its results and the cause of their separation. In his letter to the Maharshi Moozomdar wrote among other things the following which is well worth attention :—

"The strange beatitudes of the Spirit of God, which, in glowing words and with feelings whose glow was still more secret and profound, you pointed out in the golden sanctuary of the soul, have not been silenced, though you have been silent ever so long.....And amid the complexities of doctrines and practices that characterize the Brahma Samaj of to-day, I can still vividly trace the outlines of the sweet and

glorious conceptions, sweet as simple that distilled from your teachings like heavenly dew. So long as God, the Indwelling Spirit, the Life of life, the Inspirer of transcendental thought, lives and reigns in the Brahma Samaj, and His reign is eternal, so long shall grateful love and honour point to your teachings and character."

The Maharshi, in reply to this letter, wrote among other things :—

"Some honour him (Keshub), others censure him; but in honour and dishonour, in praise and blame, he remains firm and absolutely devotes his life to the progress of the Brahma Samaj. In the palace of the Prince and in the cottage of the peasant, he enters like the sunbeam, and spreads the light of religion. So long as he disseminates God's religion and so long as he sings His glory, so long is his life; and even death will be dear to him for the sake of truth. His powers are like the glory of the mid-day sun; but his cheerfulness, his gentleness, his piety brighten the beauty of his face. That handsome face is still a living reality in my heart. If in my mind there lives the image of any man, it is his image. His whole form from the peculiar manner in which he dresses his hair to the bright nails on his feet, at this moment even as I write this letter, appear in my mind like living realities. If for any one I have shed tears of love, it is for him.....In the love for our country we have felt the desire of wisdom to be satisfied by what our own Rishis have taught. But he, inspired with a love catholic and extraordinary, has prepared himself to bring about a reconciliation between the Monotheists of India and those of Arabia and Palestine."

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### CHAPTER III, KESHUB AND HIS CO-LABOURERS AND DISCIPLES.

Great as Maharshi Devendra Nath's personal influence was, undoubtedly the greatest individual influence under which Keshub ever came, there was another, which, though of a far different nature, was even more powerful in its cumulative effect. It was none other than the reflex action of Keshub's influence on his associates, disciples and friends. By the time that Keshub met Maharshi for the first time, he had with him already a group of earnest young men, who looked upon him as their sole leader, guide and captain. And even when they came to know Devendra Nath, the latter was too high, both socially and spiritually, to be their personal guide and it was left to Keshub to lead them all the while. The social and religious needs of these men, who had left their all and followed in the footsteps of Keshub in the service of God and the regeneration of their motherland (a work in which they were the first and foremost as pioneers of all those who have followed them since, whether in the Brahma Samaj or in any other Samaj or society, religious, political or social or educational) were manifold, their temperaments and talent were varied, and some of them were even more radical than Keshub himself. Hence Keshub, as their representative leader, became one with them in a way he could not become with Devendra Nath. Keshub's synthetic character had begun to develop very early, and he tried to assimilate their character and special excellences to his own. He felt their needs to be his own, and identified himself with them

to such an extent that he became a true representative of theirs. As many a leader rightly follows his own followers sometimes, so Keshub too did, particularly in this early part of his life.

A dozen or two of these, who constituted the very heart of the Brahma Samaj and on whose very life-blood the Brahma Samaj may well be said to be reared, and who joined Keshub from the very first days of his youthful activity even before he joined the Brahma Samaj and with one solitary exception were with him till the last; were factors in moulding Keshub's ideas and ideals not many degrees less than Keshub was in moulding theirs. It was their faith and trust in him and in his guidance which brought out the very best in him. They thought, prayed, spoke and acted under his influence and inspiration alone, and thus they were moulded into men, the like of whom have rarely been seen in Modern India. Under the fostering care and guidance of Keshub, each of them succeeded in developing his peculiar talent and excellence to such a wonderful extent, that the work and above all the character of most of them, several of whom were living until very recently, is a real marvel and miracle of modern days.

With the progress of years, Keshub began to look upon himself more and more as their representative leader, while they in their turn began to look upon him as their hero, and paid him even hero-worship, some more some less. Again and again their mutual relationship has been criticized by Keshub's foes as well as friends and Keshub has been even accused of encouraging and accepting "man-worship," while his disciples have been styled "man-worshippers."

The charge as it stands is groundless, and the oft-repeated declarations of his own utter unworthiness of the honours of a prophet have a pathetic interest of their own, and are perhaps quite unique in the religious history of India, if not that of the world. Yet Keshub himself was too much of a hero-worshipper not to appreciate hero-worship and prefer it to a cold, critical and at best constitutional assent and allegiance. Hero-worship was half of his religion even at this early part of his life as can be seen from his lecture on Great Men which he gave in 1866, a lecture in which we find the idea of hero-worship, to which Carlyle gave utterance in modern times with such emphasis, developed on its spiritual side. Hence if he found others giving him voluntarily and spontaneously that sort of hero-worship, he took it as a phenomenon of the healthy and higher nature of man, to whom hero-worship should be the most natural act of his life as it was to Keshub himself, and he may well have considered such hero-worship of himself even providential. It may well be that he was as much taken by surprise, a real spiritual surprise, as his disciples and others, when in a great spiritual excitement at Monghyr in the year 1868, people prostrated themselves at his feet and almost prayed him to save them, some going so far as to call him their "saviour." Such a thing never happened again, but what happened then left an abiding influence on the mind of Keshub, as well as that of most of his immediate followers, and they may have well looked upon that as the beginning of a new order of things. It is true that most of his immediate disciples, much less the larger public, never took Keshub for an Avatar or Saviour. Their rationalism was too strong for that.

They did not even take him to be a prophet in the same sense as Moses or Mohammed, for they believed too much in Keshub to declare him to be what he had repeatedly said he was not, but they looked upon him as their heaven-appointed minister whom they were bound to follow in all matters pertaining to their religious life, and whose judgment in all such things was inspired and almost infallible. Keshub too claimed as much. This mutual relationship between the minister and the ministered, the shepherd and his flock, in the absence of a belief in any definite revelation of God, was quite indefinite and varied according to the temperament of each, and it assumed in some cases fantastic and even grotesque shapes. Hence it was a problem with Keshub as to how far his authority was to be reconciled with the independence of each member of the Samaj of which he was the minister, and one may well doubt whether he or any of his followers ever solved it satisfactorily.

Of this mutual relationship, which was peculiar, deep and profound, undefined as it was, there was a perpetual renewing in the daily prayers and worship of Keshub together with his disciples. This common daily worship, which was instituted in 1866, was a marked feature of their spiritual discipline. To the impulse and inspiration that came therefrom they all surrendered themselves wholly, and it was the sole fount of their and more particularly of Keshub's ideas and ideals. In these daily morning gatherings there was always a fresh outpouring of divine grace attended by new prayers, new songs and new praise, a sort of heavenly manna which served them as the very sustenance of their spirits, and which kept them up

on their oft-weary march without any promised land in sight or mind. Theirs was a company of pilgrims marching under their chosen leader through the wilderness of a negative faith out of the Egypt of Hindu idolatry, polytheism and pantheism. But they were not without their cloud by day and light by night, and this was the daily grace that they received at their daily prayers. This was the result of a sudden development in the mind of Keshub of a strong sense of sin, a feeling of repentance and a corresponding grace of God, which all were transmuted into something to which was applied the well-known name of *Bhakti*. The beautiful description of the whole process may well be quoted here as it is given by Moozomdar, who says with regard to it as follows :—

“ His nature, however, took a sudden and and strange turn about the beginning of 1867. The rupture of friendly relations with Devendra Nath Tagore, the unpopularity following upon the lecture on Jesus Christ and Great Men, the absence of worldly resources, and even of a place of worship, the vacillations and serious differences among his own companions, joined perhaps to his strong vivid sense of sin and shortcoming, created quite a mental crisis for Keshub. He had no human counsellor, no earthly guide. His sorrow in imperceptible degrees flowed into the depths of Divine sympathy. It deepened the tones of his piety, gave a reality to his dependence, a pathos to his prayers, a tenderness to his trust, very unusual indeed in his case. About this time he began to hold daily Divine services in his house with a view to find spiritual comfort in his trials,

as well as to create more internal sympathy among himself and his friends. These services by a speedy and unforeseen process acquired profound sweetness and the emotions of his powerful nature were stirred to the bottom. With Keshub this was a new experience, with us all it was a new delightful surprise. He had an abundance of moral austerity and acute intelligence, no one could excel him in fiery enthusiasm. But hitherto he had been a stranger to this extreme tenderness of devotional sentiment, and when it came in the course of time and circumstance, he hailed this ecstasy of a new life with all the characteristic ardour of his nature. One thing, in itself a singular fact, difficult to account for, added to the intensity of his fervour. The spirit of the Vaishnav religion entered into Brahma devotions at this time. Vaishnav hymns, commonly called Sankirtan, adapted to Vaishnav tune and sentiment, were introduced; Vaishnav instruments of music, namely, the *Khole*, the *Kartal* and the *Ektara* were also brought into requisition.....This new kind of musical celebration began to be known by the name of Brahma Sankirtana. A new epoch dawned upon the Samaj with the introduction of this Brahma Sankirtana. It meant the opening up of a new world of religious feeling, it laid the foundation of a new spiritual relationship with the most popular of the recent prophets of India, the apostle of Bhakti, *viz*, Chaitanya. Thus Keshub stood at the threshold of his independent career with the shadow of Jesus on the one hand, and the shadow of Chaitanya on the other."

## CHAPTER IV.

KESHUB'S FIRST LECTURE  
ON JESUS CHRIST.

Before the new development described at the end of the last chapter had taken place, Keshub, soon after his separation from Devendra gave his first famous lecture "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia." Whether the immediate cause thereof was a political controversy then raging to the embitterment of the racial relations between the English and the Indians or his most laudable desire to begin his new career with a frank and full confession of what he felt with regard to Jesus Christ and his teaching, and thereby to declare openly that he did not mean to make his movement purely ethnic as was the old Brahma Samaj which he had just left, there is no doubt that the subject was one which was pressing on his mind long since, and with regard to which he had been unable to unburden himself because he was on the matter at hopeless variance with Maharshi Devendra Nath. It is very likely that during the few months that had passed between the open rupture and the time when the lecture was given, during which he felt the desolation of his position more than ever, he made a special study of the problem of Christianity in a solitary retirement to an ancestral garden, where he lived alone, thinking and writing a great deal. To quote the words of Moozomdar "Seely's book" *Ecce Homo* was just then out and Keshub and his friends made a special study of it. Moozomdar says, "He read the book and was its enthusiastic admirer. There is no doubt it greatly

helped him to make up his estimate of the moral value of Christ's teachings. Ecce Homo's suggestions did incalculable good to Keshub and his friends. For a long time we discussed the book with interest and conspicuous benefit."

The lecture forms the first of that great series of lectures which built up his "colossal reputation" as an orator of the highest kind, whose like has not been seen since in India, and according to what was said to the present writer by the head of a most important Christian Mission, who had heard men like Gladstone, Bright and other great orators of that period, was not seen even in England. These lectures, which became later a regular feature of the anniversary celebration in the Brahma Samaj, drew large and select audiences, and were attended more than once by even the highest officials of the Government including the Viceroy.

The selection of the title of the lecture "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia," and its treatment accordingly, was a real stroke of spiritual genius on the part of Keshub, and it alone would be sufficient to show his extraordinary powers as an apologist, if not an apostle. Almost at a single bound, he made the religious consciousness of the Hindus expand to all-Asiatic proportions, and he not only removed the very great prejudices that the people of this country had formed against Christianity as the religion of their European conquerors, with whom chiefly it had come to be entirely associated, but may have made many prepossessed with and even take pride in it as the religion not of Europe but of Asia. Though little noticed at the time, it was indeed



a most fruitful line of thought that Keshub had struck out for himself and for his country. It is thus that he introduces the lecture :—

“ On referring to the map of what is known as the Old World, we find two vast continents, Europe and Asia, separated from each other by the Ural Mountains, the River Ural, and a number of inland seas. Near the Southern extremity of this boundary line, and bordering on the waters of the Mediterranean, lies the country called the Holy Land. Here, upwards of eighteen hundred years ago, Jesus Christ, the greatest and truest benefactor of mankind, lived and died. Here he originated that mighty religious movement which has achieved such splendid results in the world, and scattered the blessings of saving truth on untold nations and generations. I propose this evening to trace the gradual and steady progress of this grand movement, and its influence on the character and destinies of the European and Asiatic nations. It will be seen how the Church of Christ grew and expanded from small beginnings; how, but a small rivulet at first, it increased in depth and breadth as it flowed along, swept away in its resistless tide the impregnable strongholds of ancient error and superstition, and the accumulated corruptions of centuries and by spreading its genial currents on humanity, fertilized it, and produced cheering and magnificent harvests. I shall endeavour to show how, under an over-ruling Providence, it has brought the Asiatic and European races together, and made the East and the West kiss each other in fraternal

sympathy, how it has linked the best representatives of the two continents in India, and come to affect our interests at this distance of time and place. I shall compare the national character of the two nations in relation to the high standard of Christian ethics, and point out their respective defects and shortcomings, which prevent their harmonious union and counteract the spirit of true Christianity. I shall show the absolute necessity which exists for a proper appreciation of Christ's precepts by the Natives and Europeans in the present critical state of India, and impress upon you those fundamental precepts, the observance of which the present age seems specially to demand. In addressing you on this momentous theme, I cannot, however, forget that I am a Brahma. I will not dissemble my convictions, which differ, as you are aware, from the orthodox opinions of popular Christianity. Whatever differences, however, there may be on strictly theological questions, I must say I am no hater of Christianity, much less of Jesus Christ. I cherish the profoundest reverence for the character of Jesus, and the lofty ideal of moral truth which he taught and lived; and it is to impress his moral excellence on my countrymen, as well as the European community in India, unbiassed by sectarian bigotry or the spirit of theological wrangling that I appear before you this evening."

His moral estimate of Jesus is given in these words:—

"Verily he was above ordinary humanity. Sent by Providence to reform and regenerate mankind,

he received from Providence wisdom and power for that great work, and throughout his career and administration, and in the subsequent effects of his grand movement, we find positive evidence of that miraculous power with which inspired greatness vanquishes mighty potentates, hurls down dynasties and uproots kingdoms, and builds up from chaos and corruption the kingdom of truth and God, of freedom and harmony."

Then he traces the progress of the Church through martyrdoms and persecutions till the time of Constantine, and then again in the time of the Reformation and in the Missions of these days and says:—

"Such has been the gradual progress of Christianity, such the wondrous growth of the seed planted by Jesus. Tell me, brethren, whether you regard Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, as an ordinary man? Is there a single soul in this large assembly who would scruple to ascribe extraordinary greatness and supernatural moral heroism to Jesus Christ and him crucified? Was not he who by his wisdom illuminated, and by his power saved, a dark and wicked world,—was not he who has left us such a priceless legacy of divine truth, and whose blood has wrought such wonders for eighteen hundred years—was not he above ordinary humanity? Blessed Jesus, immortal child of God! For the world he lived and died. May the world appreciate him and follow his precepts!"

After tracing at length the history of the Christian Church he enters into the practical part of his lecture which was to ask both the English, because they

were Christians, and the Indians, because they were Asiatics and as such could not but respect and reverence and follow Christ, to keep the precepts and the ideal of Christ before them and to govern their mutual relations accordingly. He sees the hand of Providence in the fact that India's destiny is in the hands of the English, a Christian nation, and says that because these two countries are politically united, they should be united morally too. But instead of peace there is antipathy, for concord there is discord.

Reminding the Europeans of their duties and responsibilities as Christians, he says :—

“I cherish great respect for the Europeans, not for any secular considerations, but for the sake of Jesus Christ, whom they profess to follow, and whom, I believe, it is their mission to make known to us in words as well as deeds. It is the bounden duty of all Europeans in India so to prove their fidelity to him in all the avocations of their private and public life, that through the influence of their example the spirit of true Christian righteousness may leaven Native society. I regard every European settler in India as a missionary of Christ, and I have a right to demand that he should always remember and act up to his high responsibilities. But alas! owing to the reckless conduct of a number of pseudo-Christians, Christianity has failed to produce any wholesome moral influence on my countrymen. Yea, their muscular Christianity has led many a native to identify the religion of Jesus with the power and privilege of inflicting blows and kicks with impunity. And thus Jesus has been dishonoured in India, and thus, alas! the true spirit

of his religion has been lost upon the natives through the recklessness of a host of nominal Christians. Behold Christ's Church in danger! Behold Christ crucified in the lives of those who profess to be his followers! Had it not been for them, the name of Jesus Christ would have been ten times more glorified than it seems to have been. I hope, that, for India's sake, Christ's sake, for Truth's sake, the Christians in India will always conscientiously strive to realize in their lives the high morality of the Gospel.....I rejoice, yea, I am proud that I am an Asiatic: and was not Jesus Christ an Asiatic? Yes, and his disciples were Asiatics, and all the agencies primarily employed for the propagation of the Gospel were Asiatic. In fact, Christianity was founded and developed by Asiatics, and in Asia. When I reflect on this, my love for Jesus becomes a hundredfold intensified, I feel him nearer my heart, and deeper in my national sympathies. Why should I then feel ashamed to acknowledge that nationality which he acknowledged? Shall I not rather say he is more congenial and akin to my Oriental nature, more agreeable to my Oriental habits of thought and feeling? And is it not true that an Asiatic can read the imageries and allegories of the Gospel, and its description of natural sceneries, of customs and manners, with greater interest and a fuller perception of their force and beauty, than Europeans? In Christ we see not only the exaltedness of humanity, but also the grandeur of which Asiatic nature is susceptible. To us Asiatics, therefore, Christ is doubly interesting, and his religion is entitled to our peculiar regard as an

altogether Oriental affair. The more this fact is pondered, the less I hope will be the antipathy and hatred of European Christians against Oriental nationalities, and the greater the interest of the Asiatics in the teachings of Christ. And thus in Christ, Europe and Asia, the East and the West, may learn to find harmony and unity."

The key to the whole lecture is to be found in the last three sentences and especially the last but one, and it shows what a double-edged sword Keshub had begun to wield at this very early period of his life. There was indeed a danger of putting too much emphasis on the local aspect i.e. the Asiatic side of Christ and Christianity, and Keshub later on perhaps did suffer from it, but so far as this lecture is concerned, Keshub had already sufficiently emphasised the universal aspect of Christ's life and teachings, so as not to make the mistake of regarding this subsidiary aspect as the whole.

Having protested on the ground of Christ's oriental origin against the vilification of the oriental character by Europeans, he proceeds:—

"I must therefore protest against that denationalization which is so general among native converts to Christianity. With the religion of their heathen forefathers, they generally abandon the manners and customs of their country, and with Christianity they embrace the usages of Europeans even in dress and diet; they assume an affected air of outlandishness, which estranges them from their own countrymen. They deliberately and voluntarily cut themselves off from Native Society as soon as they are Baptized, and as an inevitable consequence, come to contract a sort of repugnance

to everything Oriental, and an enthusiastic admiration for everything European. They seem to be ashamed of their country and their nationality. They forget that Christ, their master, was an Asiatic, and that it is not necessary in following him to make themselves alien to their country or race. I sincerely beseech them not to confound the spirit of Christianity with the fashions of Western civilization. May they aspire to the glory of following the example of their great Master, who, though he inculcated catholic truth for all mankind, was not ashamed to live and die a simple and poor Asiatic."

As for the precepts of Christ by which he would like to see the relations of Indians and Europeans governed, he singles out two above all, which are forgiveness and self-sacrifice. He says, "It is these two cardinal principles of Christian ethics—so utterly opposed to the wisdom of the world, and so far exalted above its highest conceptions of rectitude—which require to be daily impressed upon the European and Native races, as upon the proper appreciation of these, I believe, depends the reformation of their character.

After exhorting both Indians and Europeans to practise forgiveness, in the spirit in which Christ himself forgave his enemies even when he was on the Cross, he invites his countrymen especially to follow the example of self-sacrifice which Christ showed in such a wonderful manner. He says that that is the need of the time in India if it is at all to go forward in the path of social and religious reform. He says:—

"I assure you, brethren, nothing short of self-sacrifice, of which Christ has furnished so bright

an example, will regenerate India. We must love God with our whole heart; we must live and die for truth. With singleness of purpose, and with unwavering fidelity, we must obey the call of duty, and under no circumstances should we compromise our conscience.....Fill your hearts with the love of truth, and resign yourself to the will of God, and with self-sacrificing enthusiasm go forth to discharge your duties to your country, regardless of all consequences. And the better to stimulate you to a life of self-denial, I hold up to you the cross on which Jesus died. May his example so influence you that you may be prepared to offer even your blood, if need be, for the regeneration of your country. Let my European brethren do all they can to establish and consolidate the moral kingdom of Christ in India. Let them preach from their pulpits, and exhibit in their life the great principles of charity and self-sacrifice. And on the basis of these principles, may brotherly intercourse and co-operation be established between them and my countrymen. Oh! for the day, when race antagonism will perish, and strife, discord and all manner of unbrotherly feeling shall for ever pass away, and harmony shall prevail among us all! May England and India, Europe and Asia, be indissolubly united in charity and love, and self-denying devotion to truth!" \*

The passages quoted above are most pertinent to-day to the political situation which has arisen not only in India but all over Asia, but they were not without value, even at that time, scarcely a decade after the mutiny when the relations between the Europeans and Indians



were also strained. But Keshub did not aim in this lecture at the solution of the political problem alone, nor was his aim merely theological as most people, particularly the Brahmas and Christian missionaries, not unnaturally but mistakenly supposed. Indeed it was no wonder that the members of the old Brahma Samaj who bore a grudge against Keshub thought that now that he had separated himself from them the cat was out of the bag, and that they were well rid of him as well as his bag; and also that the missionaries with their evangelical enthusiasm thought that Keshub Chunder Sen was not far from the Christian Church, and that it was perhaps a matter of months for him to openly join their ranks. But a careful analysis of this lecture will show that nothing was further from Keshub's mind at this time. It is true that he here shows himself far more favourable to the cause of Christian Missions and even to orthodox Christianity than a few years previously when he had actually entered into the lists of controversy with the missionaries. But he studiously avoids any the least approach to any of the great and fundamental dogmas of Christianity. He does not speak of Christ as the Son of God, even in the Unitarian sense. That word he does not utter even once.

But if his aim was neither mainly political nor theological, it was politico-religious in the very highest sense of the term. Keshub had set to himself at this very early age of 28 years the task of building up an Indian Nationality, a task which was almost new in his time, and to which he contributed more than any one else. He had also realized that in order to achieve this end, in those early days it was absolutely necessary that the relations between English and Indians should be perfectly harmonious. Young as he then was,

it was a firm belief with him that it was Providence that had brought the two nations together, in order that India might politically, socially and morally rise, and that it would be an unparalleled calamity if these two peoples, instead of coming closer together, should be more and more estranged. And he saw no other way to bring them nearer and thus to bring about a true harmony between England and India, the East and the West, than to take them nearer to Jesus Christ, who was neither of the East nor of the West, or who though so far identified entirely with Europeans was an Asiatic of Asiatics.

In addition to this, Keshub fully realized that India could not afford to be indifferent any longer to the moral teachings and the self-sacrificing life of Jesus Christ. She may not accept all the dogmas of orthodox Christianity, but it was absolutely essential for her to be possessed with the spirit of Christ, the spirit of forgiveness, charity and supreme self-sacrifice in the cause of truth. He believed that it was a part of their national need to know and follow Christ. He said in a letter that he wrote immediately after to his friend Pratap Chunder Moozomdar, "The more is sacrifice needed in India, and the more it is made, the more will Jesus find a home in the land." That Keshub was not wrong in this belief has been made clear during the half century since the lecture was given, for with every new impulse which has come to the country and carried it in the direction of greater social or political or religious service, the people have been brought nearer to the spirit of Christ. This has been verified to the fullest extent by the late non-cooperation movement. But it was not for the secular

needs of India that Keshub wanted the spirit of Christ to prevail in India. Whether he was fully conscious of it or not at this period, there is no doubt that he had come to realize, at least to some extent, that not only national regeneration but the very essence of true religion and the universal regeneration which was involved in it lay in Christ Jesus. Keshub had already come under the wonderful spell of the beauty of the Person of Christ, and he saw that it was through Him alone that there could be the true regeneration of individuals as well as of nations. Perhaps by this time he had already formed a unique conception of Christ and Christianity, and his own mission as an apostle thereof for India, if not for Asia. There is not the least doubt that he had much more in mind though it did not amount to orthodox Christianity. All this is illustrated by the following extract from the letter to Moozomdar mentioned above :—

“As regards my recent lecture, you ought to remember that I was never ambitious of making Jesus Christ the subject of a learned literary essay or theological discourse. Unless I can live Jesus to some extent at least, I cannot talk Jesus. Nor could I undertake to preach Jesus to my countrymen till I am fully persuaded that the time has come for such preaching. In other words I must be fit, and the age must be fit, before I can wield the sword which that inspired Prophet brought with him into the world. Of course, I have my own ideas about Christ, but I am not bound to give them out in due form, until altered circumstances of the country gradually develop them out of my mind. Jesus is identical with self-sacrifice,

and as he lived and preached in the fulness of time, so must he in turn be preached in the fulness of time. The more is sacrifice needed in India, and the more it is made, the more will Jesus find a home in this land. I am, therefore, patiently waiting that I may grow with the age and the nation and the spirit of Christ's sacrifice grow therewith."

So great was the enthusiasm of Keshub and his friends at this time for Jesus Christ, that they even observed the Christmas for a year or so with fasting etc., and Keshub even began to call himself Jesudas, servant of Jesus, a practice which was discontinued shortly after but again renewed later on in life.

However, the misunderstandings caused by this lecture, and the misrepresentations thereof were so great, that Keshub was forced to give another, which may well be considered its complement, his lecture on "Great Men". But as the misunderstanding was increased rather than lessened, Keshub perhaps thought that the time for preaching Christ had not come, and so he remained practically silent on the subject for nearly thirteen years, waiting for the fulness of time and the fitness of the age as well as of himself.

## CHAPTER V.

THE CULT OF GREAT MEN AND THE  
NATIONAL CHURCH.

In the lecture entitled 'Great Men,' which he gave a few months after the first, Keshub laid down some of those principles which were to guide his Church and along with it the whole of India. He laid down therein his philosophy of hero-worship, and the place it occupied in the religious life of men and nations. Though there was very little that was entirely original in the lecture, there is no doubt that he struck a note that was new for the Brahma Samaj as well as for India. It was even an advance upon the philosophy of Heroes and of Representative Men, as propounded by the latest thinkers of Europe and America such as Carlyle and Emerson; for while with them the subject had more of an intellectual or practical interest, with Keshub it became a matter of purely religious interest, a difference in which the peculiarity of the temperaments of the East and the West may well be marked.

Basing his conception of the importance of Great Men in History on the well-known dictum of Carlyle that 'all history is the biography of great men,' and of ordinary men on the words of Victor Cousin that they are 'the anonymous beings of the human species,' both of which he here quotes, he says, "Great men have also been called Representative Men, Geniuses, Heroes, Prophets, Reformers, and Redeemers, according to their various functions and characteristics." He calls them in a sense superhuman and even supernatural, though he denies anything miraculous in them. He

says further that they appear when they are needed. In the established economy of Providence they are special dispensations, to meet the pressing wants of humanity. They have further a representative character, representing their country and age, and specific ideas. Their essential characteristics are the absence of selfishness, sincerity, originality of wisdom and invincible power and humility.

As types of great men he mentions those very names which Carlyle mentions viz. Luther, Mohammed and John Knox. To these he adds Chaitanya. And it is thus that he defines their relation with Christ and to the world at large.

“Each of the prophets came into the world as a messenger of God, bearing a distinct message of glad tidings which he contributed to the cause of religious enlightenment and progress. We must then freely honour all of them, and gratefully accept from each what he has to deliver, instead of binding ourselves as slaves to any particular person as the only chosen prophet of God. For at sundry times and in diverse places God spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. And though Jesus Christ, the Prince of Prophets, effected greater wonders, and did infinitely more good to the world than the others, and deserves therefore our profoundest reverence, we must not neglect that chain, or any single link in that chain of prophets that preceded him, and prepared the world for him; nor must we refuse honour to those who, coming after him, have carried on the blessed work of human regeneration for which he lived and died. Let sectarianism perish, then.

Let denominational and geographical boundaries be for ever forgotten, and let all nations unite in celebrating a universal festival in honour of all prophets, regarding them as the Elder Brothers of the human race."

Keshub Chunder Sen mentions in this very lecture three ways in which God reveals himself to man, viz. Nature, Soul and History. These three ways may be called by the well-known names of Vedic, Vedantic and Pauranic ways of knowing God, and they may be associated with the three leaders respectively as they actually are in the Brahma Samaj. But with this difference that Keshub made the movement universal instead of merely national.

It was, therefore, in perfect accordance with this eclecticism and reverence for all great men of whatever race or country or creed, that the Brahma Samaj of India, which was established only about a month or two after this lecture was given, came to have its peculiar scripture and constitution. These two lectures viz. that on Jesus Christ, and on Great Men, and the Brahma Samaj of India well known as Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj belong to a single train of thought and they cannot be separated from one another. Keshub's sole desire in founding this Church was to unite all the races and peoples of India in one Brotherhood, which, recognizing the common Fatherhood of God and having common property (if such a term may be used) in all the great men of the world, 'The Elder Brothers of the race' to use his own phrase, may no more know any of those distinctions which had divided them hitherto, and had kept them in their low state, politically, socially and

morally. In order that he might realize this end, he made the Brahma Samaj of India in its religious character no more ethnic, but eclectic, and looking up for all its motive power and moral dynamics to all great men with Jesus-Christ at their head.

The idea of a National Church was the first of its kind in modern India, and undoubtedly it is to that more than to any other single institution, whether political, social or religious, that the making of New India is due. It alone aimed at uniting all the people of India not merely politically but socially and spiritually. It attracted to itself some of the greatest men among the Hindus, in all parts of the country, from North to South, East to West. Religious and social reformers and even political leaders flocked to it everywhere and it gave a new turn to the life of the whole country. Branches of the Brahma Samaj sprang up on all sides, idolatry was discarded and discredited, and even the caste-system received perhaps the rudest shock it had ever received since the day of Buddhism. But all this influence was not confined merely to the Brahma Samaj or its followers. As the most notable religious movement of modern times in India, it has deeply influenced every indigenous movement that has sprung up since. Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the Arya Samaj, although he could not see his way to co-operate with Keshub Chunder Sen, much as he wished to do, had profound respect for Keshub and may have modelled his movement on this premier movement with full knowledge both of its merits and its defects. The Theosophical Society, which started with an altogether different programme of work, as represented to-day by its greatest leader Dr. Besant, chiefly in its social propaganda and religious eclecticism, is



very like the Brahma Samaj of India and the Church of the New Dispensation. Nor were other leaders free from the influence that Keshub thus set aworking in these early days. It is thus that this all-India organization, which was the first of its kind, has influenced all the succeeding religious movements of the land, and directly or indirectly all social and even political movements.

The membership of this National Church was open to men and women of every race, colour or creed, and men from all parts of the country joined its ranks. As for its Scripture a selection of texts such as agreed with the Theistic principles of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, was made from all the great scriptures of the world. To this they added for their motto the following which was composed into a Sanskrit verse by one of Keshub's followers:

"The wide universe is the temple of God; Wisdom is the pure land of pilgrimage; Truth is the everlasting scripture. Faith is the root of all religion; Love is the true spiritual culture; the destruction of selfishness is the true asceticism; So declare the Brahmas."

Although this ideal of a National Church has not been realized to any appreciable extent, in spite of its great influence upon all contemporary and succeeding movements, there is not the least doubt that the religious eclecticism thereof, with the idea of hero-worship and reverence for all great men, has been a part of the spiritual life of the Indian people since then. It is one of the great ideas of the Modern Age, and almost all people all over the world are more or less adopting it as their own. Under its influence much of the narrow

sectarianism and bigotry of the world is vanishing and people to-day are more catholic in spirit than they were a century back. When Carlyle gave utterance to it for the first time in England in his lectures on Heroes and Hero-worship, and called Mohammed a real hero, he was met with a cry of indignation hard to understand to-day. The ideas then so new have become common property to-day. The same thing has happened in India also. Before Keshub began to speak of Christ and other great men in the way he did, such a thing would have been considered a sign of apostasy, and a man would have been excommunicated merely for reading the Koran or the Bible. If to-day in India, and particularly among Hindus, people have ceased to consider the distinctions of native and foreign in the region of religion to any extent, it is largely due to Keshub Chunder Sen. Other forces have indeed been at work, such as that of Ram Krishna Paramhansa and the Theosophical Society, but they came later, and were far from making this reverence for all great men a part and parcel of their creed, as Keshub did from the very beginning.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### MYSTICISM.

While Keshub was developing these ideals of social and religious reform and embodying them in a National Church which might comprehend within itself the whole of the Indian Nation, he was at the same time not forgetful of those things of the spirit on which alone such institutions can be truly built. This side of his character he himself later on called mysticism, and provided nothing of an occult kind is understood by that word, it may be rightly used. Whether it be called transcendental idealism, or mysticism, or by any other name, there is no doubt that it was something unique in his case and was operative at this early period of his life. He gave it at this time the name of 'faith', and the principles and laws thereof he laid down in a booklet that he wrote just a few days before the formal establishment of the Brahma Samaj of India, called 'True Faith.' It was meant to be a guide to Brahma missionaries as well as to himself also. Keshub laid down apostolical standards therein, and it is solely due to the fact that these standards were practised by the missionaries of the Brahma Samaj that the founding and the working of the National Church became at all possible, and Keshub could do all the great work that he was able to do. If any little book of that size ever achieved wonders in the moral world, it was this little book. It is said to have been written with his heart's blood, and it may be added without exaggeration that it was re-written with the very life-blood of his disciples and that the characters in which it was written were the historical events of the life of the Brahma Samaj. It inspired these missionaries and

a great many of the Brahmas also with apostolical and heroic courage which made them face the very greatest difficulties of privation, poverty and persecution, and constrained them to carry their message to all the four corners of India. It was their self-sacrifice which made the Brahma Samaj what it came to be in course of time, and whenever a just, fair and impartial reckoning of the debt of modern India to those who have contributed to the making of it is made, there is not the least doubt that theirs will be the foremost place. Homeless, often even breadless, with but few friends in the world and the arm of many raised against them, they went about doing their work in a way which would shame any other body of young men that has come since to serve the motherland, whether in the political, social or religious sphere. It is not that they did all this only in their youth, but even in the decline of life at the age of seventy-five or eighty.

In its first three chapters Keshub gives the main principles of Intuitional and Transcendental Theism, making the three ideas of God, Immortality and Moral Law veritable realities which he apprehends by faith. In the rest he treats of those laws of life which have governed the lives of Great Men, Prophets, and particularly the Prince of Prophets, Jesus Christ. It is true he gives a peculiar explanation of such great events in the life of Christ as the Crucifixion, Deification and Resurrection. But there is not the least doubt that the great merit of the book lies in its uniting all those powers and virtues which are the special characteristics of such Prophets under one conception *viz.* faith. This gave the varied phases of the Vedic, Vedantic and the Pauranic Theism of which he had treated in his lecture on 'Great Men' a

unity which they were lacking, and made them a compact whole. Thus in the short compass of this little book, Keshub gave in a most succinct and at the same time a most forcible manner a compendium of all the great ideas that were given expression to by him, and hence it was no wonder that the book served for a long time the whole of the Brahma Samaj, and particularly its missionaries as a "guide of faith and practice", and even now its usefulness is far from being exhausted.

It is not surprising that such a book should have been spoken of by Miss Collet, an English lady, who, though she was an orthodox Christian, was at this time an enthusiastic admirer of Keshub Chunder Sen, and took a great interest in the Brahma Samaj, as one 'which resembles the medieval mystics in its "beatific vision" of God and in the sharp contrast drawn between the life of faith and the life of the world.' It has been called by Pundit Shivrath Shastri, who has been one of the severest critics of Keshub, one of the best ever given to the world by a religious teacher. But what is of far greater importance than these verbal testimonies from friends or critics to the great worth of the book is that Keshub's own life and career proved to be the greatest testimony to its essential truth, and it furnished the most perfect commentary thereon. If any book was prophetic of its author's future life, it was this book. While writing it Keshub had the courage to develop his convictions to their logical extremes, a thing which naturally elicited the admiration of all, but he had the far greater courage to carry the principles he thus laid down to their practical extremes and then he was met by slander,

obloquy, abuse, misunderstanding, and even a premature death. Thus he not only preached but practised even to the very letter what he preached.

About a year after this, on the very day when the foundation of the Brahma Mandir, a place of worship for the Calcutta *i. e.* the central branch of the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj, was laid, Keshub gave his lecture on 'Regenerating Faith'. In it he covered much the same ground that he had done in True Faith, except that he now contrasts not merely the spirit and the world but the religion of the spirit and of the world.

"In the religion of the world," he says, "man is his own guide, and to a great extent his own saviour. He depends upon his own faculties and powers for the attainment of truth, and for deliverance from sin. Its prayer is that man's will may be done on earth in the name of God. Whereas the prayer of heaven's creed is that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven." He calls the religion of the world an "Old Testament creed" and that of the heaven the "New Testament religion".

"What shall I do to be saved? and not till this great question is fully solved by the cheering gospel of the New Testament faith, can man enjoy true rest and enduring peace. Hence is it that all who really seek the blessing of salvation naturally try to pass beyond the little sphere of the rationalistic and prudential religion of the world, and the powerless ethics of the Old Testament, and press forward to the kingdom of heaven, where man is regenerated in truth and holiness, not by the law but by Divine grace."

During the year that intervened between the writing of 'True Faith' and this time, Keshub's own nature had gone through a chastening process, and it is reflected here in the greater evangelical character that his 'faith' assumes. He speaks more and more of 'grace', the counterpart and even the source of faith without which it would be impossible for faith even to exist, much less to live and grow. It is no more heroic faith that he now pleads for as he had done in his booklet, a faith which would be the despair of ordinary men, but childlike faith that he wants from all. It was very likely due to a greater realization of God's grace in the meanwhile that this change took place in his mind, for it was during these days that the Bhakti movement spoken of above had come into existence and was having a large sway over his mind and heart. He speaks of repentance, penitence, faith and prayer, thus describing that very phenomenon in religious history which is known as 'conversion', and he even speaks of 'justification by faith', though he does not use it in exactly the same sense as the Christians of the evangelical school. He says:-

"Faith is preceded by sincere repentance which paves the way for it. Before the heart is converted to God through faith, it first feels the enormity of its wickedness, looks with abhorrence upon the black spots of its past life, and smarts under a keen sense of its own worthlessness; and the more it does so, the more it learns to distrust self, and repose faith and trust in God as its only refuge and hope. As in the history of the world, so in the history of individuals, John the Baptist precedes Jesus Christ, and prepares the way for him. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at

hand," is the universal call to all mankind; for none is fitted to enter that kingdom, or receive the gospel of saving faith, unless and until he repents.....Repentance begins the good work of conversion, which faith and prayer carry on. By opening the eyes of the sinner to iniquities, it fosters a longing for deliverance. Faith and prayer act as guides, and safely lead the penitent sinner into the kingdom of heaven where he is regenerated by divine grace."

And then a little further on:—

"Hence it is that Jesus Christ, whose mission was to regenerate mankind, constantly urged upon his followers as an exemplar for imitation the character of little children, and emphatically said, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." He never inculcated the ethics of the world; he preached the holiness of the kingdom of heaven, the godliness of regenerate existence. He would not allow the least compromise between God and mammon, between religion and worldliness. He would have men forsake all and follow him, sacrifice all temporal interests, and even life if necessary, for the sake of truth."

The day on which Keshub gave this lecture was a day of great triumph for him. The idea of his National Church had got a local habitation and a name. The Israel of his disciples and followers wandering in the wilderness so far had now come within sight of their promised land, and their cause was more popular than ever before. Some of the finest young men of Bengal, such as Anand Mohan Bose, Shivrath Shastri and



others who formally joined the Brahma Samaj a year later, were already attracted towards it. Even the very audience he was addressing contained within it men like Lord Lawrence, the Viceroy, and other high officials, besides Dr. Norman Macleod, the famous Scottish preacher, who paid a great tribute to Keshub's eloquence. On that day Keshub was laying the foundation of this mystic or spiritual religion, which was to come into conflict one day with that religion of the world of which also he had spoken in this very lecture. While his 'True Faith' with its high and heroic, even apostolic ideal was meant for the missionaries of the Brahma Samaj only, the evangelical ideal he laid down here for all of whatever occupation and position in life was meant to serve as the foundation of his national and universal Church which should embrace the nation and even the whole world. Keshub himself stood before his countrymen as their foremost religious and social leader, and the best and the highest in the land looked upon him as one who would lead them out of the prevailing chaos due to the multiplicity of castes and creeds and abundance of superstition and idolatry, in those dark days when there was not a single one of those movements with which we are so familiar except his own. He had not only carried the bark of the progressive Brahma Samaj through more than one storm and in the face of strong winds to a place of assured safety, but had made it an ark of refuge for many a wayfarer and weary pilgrim. He had travelled widely in India more than once in his mission-tours, and had conquered the hearts of people everywhere by his magnetic personality and wonderful eloquence. He was known all over the country and even beyond,

particularly in England where he had found many sympathisers in his work. For years he had had the cause of moral and spiritual union of England and India, and through it that of the East and the West, at his heart, a cause peculiarly his own, and he had tried his best to further it. In England he had old friends among the Theists and the Unitarians who had long been urging him to go to their country. To their solicitations were now added those of Lord Lawrence, who had just retired, and who while in India had formed very friendly relations with Keshub. Under these circumstances it was but natural that he should desire to know England and the English people better, and to do what he could in England to further the same cause, even the mission of his life, and he left India in 1870 for that purpose at the earliest opportunity that offered itself.

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## CHAPTER VII.

## THE WESTERN VISIT AND ITS EFFECTS.

It was in the spirit of a pilgrimage that Keshub made his visit to England. He went to learn rather than to teach. In the very first meeting which was held in order to welcome him, a meeting unique in character inasmuch as it was representative of almost all the great denominations, he said that he came to their country as a learner.

It is very significant that it was at this very meeting, which was in many respects the best held in his honour in that country, that Keshub heard two voices which had perhaps more influence on his mind than any other that he heard in England. Of these one was that of Dr. Martineau, the great English philosopher and leader of the Unitarians, who, representing the school of entire freedom, advocated and welcomed the Brahma Samaj as 'a movement creative of faith *de novo*.' The other was that of Dean Stanley, the great leader of the Broad Church movement in the English Church, who stood for the widest latitude within the orthodox national Church and advocated a free movement on national lines towards that part of the historical revelation of God in Christ which was common to all the Christian Churches, whether in West or East, both of which he knew so well. While the first in the state of mind of Keshub at that time may have evoked a more ready response and suggested to his sensitive mind the lines on which he was to work, there is not the least doubt that the influence of the other began to prevail at last.

As for his visit, it was nothing less than a great success and constant triumph. Wherever he went, and he went over many places in Scotland as well as England, people honoured and lionized him as no Indian has ever been in that country which knows how to honour great men. It was a new experience for Keshub as well as for the English people, both of whom forgot for a time that they were of different races and climes and were for the time united in a common sentiment of humanity and hero-worship. He addressed large audiences everywhere, and on the whole made a profound impression. This was not confined merely to the general public who were charmed with his great eloquence and beautiful personality, but extended even to the highest circles. Writing about this after Keshub's death, Max Muller said nearly fifteen years later:—

“Many of my readers must remember his eloquent addresses, and the deepest impression which they produced in the widest spheres. His name has become almost a household word in England, and I have been struck, when lecturing in different places, to find that the mere mention of K. C. Sen's name elicited applause for which I was hardly prepared.”

Among the many persons of note and rank in all walks of life that Keshub saw were Queen Victoria, Gladstone, John Stuart Mill, Martineau, Pusey, Dean Stanley, Maurice, Max Muller, besides his old friends among whom were Lord Lawrence, Francis Newman, Miss Cobbe, Miss Collet, Miss Carpenter and others. His contact with these people and many others of a like kind could not but show England to him in a very favourable light and confirm him in his great admira-

tion for that country and its civilization. No doubt he saw the seamy side of it also, but what was better he saw the good side of it and he wanted to learn lessons therefrom as to how he could incorporate all this good into the life of his country. He did not fail even to awaken the English people to their duties towards India in a public lecture, which was widely commented on in England itself and created in India a great sensation, particularly among the Anglo-Indian circles.

However it is a question whether Keshub moved in all the important circles of religious life and was able to see the best of it in England. He preached from many Unitarian and even Congregationalist pulpits, but perhaps there his first-hand knowledge of religious life in England ended. While repudiating the charge that he had fallen into the hands of the Unitarians, he said to them :—

“I tell you candidly that I felt quite at home in all Unitarian assemblies, private and public.”

He regretted, however, that they should have been under a painful necessity to adopt the word Unitarian, and would have liked them to be called purely Christian.

He gave a lecture on ‘Christ and Christianity,’ and therein differentiated Christ from Christianity, and making Christianity the same as the law and the prophets, summed it up in the two precepts of love to God and love to man, which he had said in his lecture on the Future Church would be the creed thereof. The lecture was Unitarian through and through, though he introduced himself as a Hindu Theist.

With regard to the religious life in general in England, he summed up his impressions and hopes in the farewell meeting as follows :—

"The great secret of revelation, inspiration, and salvation lies in this third idea—Holy Ghost. So long as the Holy Ghost comes not to an individual or a nation, so long God cannot be worshipped as He ought to be, and Christ cannot be honoured as he ought to be. Christ has been in the world for the last eighteen hundred years, yet how far is Christendom still from the kingdom of God! And why? Because people do not look within, they do not sufficiently acknowledge the Spirit. John the Baptist paved the way for Christ. Another John the Baptist is needed now to prepare the way for the Spirit of God. I must say that I hopefully look forward to this, for I believe that the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of truth in humanity, not Christ as God, but Christ as manifesting God—not another God but God's Spirit, working practically in the human heart. In England two great forces are at work, the one inside and the other outside the Church—bringing the whole Church of Christ nearer to Christ and nearer to God, the Broad Church movement breaking down the barriers of sect and extending the sympathies of the Christian heart, and Dissenters and liberal thinkers, helping by a pressure from without, to bring about a more rational and liberal interpretation of the doctrine of Christianity."

While describing in these words the need of England as well as that of the whole of Christendom,

Keshub was at the same time in all likelihood defining the future mission of his own life. He had already attained a very high position in the estimation of his own countrymen as a great religious reformer and teacher. In England too some very thoughtful people looked upon him as a sort of a prophet who had come to the West from the East whence prophets have always come. Even such a careful observer and thinker as Dr. Martineau thought of him as a soul most congenial to St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus Christ. Miss Cobbe, a woman of great merit, thought of him as one who was the most Christ-like man that she had seen. Pusey, the greatest divine of the Church of England, relaxed the rigour of his orthodoxy to such an extent as to say that Keshub might find a place in the kingdom of Heaven although he stood outside the pale of orthodox Christianity. Max Muller thought of him as a sort of Luther of these days. All this might naturally lead Keshub to think that he had a special mission, not only for India, but for the whole of the world. Even the idea of the New Dispensation may not have been far from his mind at this time, for there are clear traces of it in the passage quoted above, particularly in what he says with regard to John the Baptist and the Holy Ghost. In reference to the feeling with which he was received in England, Pratap Chunder Moozomdar says:—

“The most original impression which Keshub produced amongst the most thoughtful in England was the possible formation of an Asiatic Christianity. The spirituality, imaginativeness, faith, enthusiasm, and asceticism, of the East could never be bound within the cold creeds and catechisms of Europe. When they witnessed the

profusion of this warm Asiatic impulse in Keshub's utterances and character, found him to be the leader of a young, growing, abounding Church, found besides the genuineness and depth of his attachment to the Messianic ideal of Jesus, they felt, more perhaps than they cared to express, that the future of the world's religion lay in the East, and not in the West. It was James Martineau only, who, at Keshub's reception, found the courage to say, "While quick to absorb and appropriate all modern science, the Indian genius would do so without sacrificing at the same time the divine interpretation of the Universe. With subtler thought and gentler affections, it would go behind the phenomena that stop our way, and bring back the flood of the divine light in the world." In a short letter written to the late Rev. W. H. Channing on the eve of his departure from England, Sept. 16th, Keshub speaks his mind on this subject thus :—"The East and the West will unite ; such is God's will. The signs of the times greatly encourage me, and my visit to this country has clearly convinced me that it is possible to make the world our home, and to love all as brothers and sisters. God's Spirit is working everywhere. Blessed is he who sees the work and realizes the Divine Spirit."

He had long set himself the task of uniting the East and the West, and after his visit to England he was more than ever hopeful of the possibility of such a consummation. Four years ago he had said that such a union would be brought about only through Christ. This required an Asiatic Church of Christ, and to this must be added a new order of Christianity which



might make all things new. It may well have been that Keshub had already formed some chain of thought in his mind while in England, and he only abided the fulness of time to give effect to what he thought was right and proper.

Of the many friendships that he made in England there were two which were in many respects the most important, and were of great and lasting influence to the very end of his life. These were with Max Muller and Dean Stanley of Westminster Abbey, the two men who remained true to Keshub even when almost all his English friends had left him after the Cuch Behar Marriage. Of these two Max Muller is well-known to the people of this country for his great services in the field of Sanskrit scholarship as well as for his devoted love to India and her children who always found a friend in him. As for the Dean, he was indeed a man after the heart of Keshub. Like the Abbey which he represented there was room in his capacious and catholic heart for the good and great things and men of all Churches of the Christendom. But this was not all. He knew the Eastern Churches and Eastern Christianity as but few men in England did, and this had made him understand the whole of Asia and its civilization much better than most people. At the same time he was not so rigid in his orthodoxy as to repel the youthful Keshub who yet fought shy of dogmas and definitions. In addition to all this he was conservative enough to make Keshub feel that the real greatness of the English people as well as of the truly Christian character, both of which the Dean represented at their best, lay to a great extent in wholesome conservatism. In age, experience, spirituality, talents

and in all those things which make a man both good and great, the Dean was so far advanced as to make Keshub look upon him as the sage of England, and even of Europe. He was indeed a most remarkable man, and there was a sort of secret affinity between these two souls. How deep and lasting the influence of the friendship of these two men, Max Muller and Dean Stanley, was, may be seen from the following quotation from a letter that Keshub wrote to the former in the year 1881:—

“Pray read about it, and judge for yourself, whether the Holy Spirit is not moving India in the direction of true and universal Christianity. I remember the very interesting conversation we had at the Westminster Deanery in the course of which you, and also, I believe, the excellent Dean, suggested that the future Church of India should be altogether Oriental, only it should honour Christ. You see how this is being practically carried out. Do not think our Christ is denationalizing us. We are more popular now than in any previous period in the history of the Brahma Samaj. Nor is our Hinduism setting us in an attitude of hostility towards Christ or Western Science. I beg you will read the ‘New Dispensation’ paper carefully and let me know what you think of the movement. It is the religion of “Comparative Theology.” We are giving effect to the “Science of Religion” of which you are the most distinguished leader.”

While Keshub was thus fulfilling and developing the main mission of his life which was to bring about in the fulness of time a moral and spiritual union of

the East and the West, England and India, he was not forgetful of all those means which were essential to that end. He had perhaps realized while working in India that the little sympathy he was getting from the Government, however friendly, some high officials might be to him individually, was hardly sufficient for him to carry on his great work. He wanted the sympathy of the best of the British public with him in his work of social and religious reform, and this he could not get while he was in India. In addition to this, there was the political problem which was getting more and more thorny day by day, and due to it the British and the Indians were being more estranged than ever. Thus Keshub as early as 1870 felt the need of that sympathy and co-operation of the British public in England, which so many social and political leaders have felt since his day. Ram Mohun Roy had done similar work in 1830-3, but after him none else had done the same kind of work. That he was very successful in this also is evident from what he said about it on his return to India, and from the interest which the British public took in his work and career to the very end, an interest which has not been surpassed since.

Keshub returned thus a greater man, who had now added to his credit the seal of a large part of the best public opinion in Great Britain to the supreme importance of his work and his own position therein. But it was not only himself and his work that were thus made great. Keshub had succeeded in raising India, even the whole of the East in the estimation of England. He had gone there as an Asiatic, an Indian, and he returned more confirmed in his Asiatic and Hindu nationality than before. He was indeed far

from satisfied with all that he saw in England or of the English civilization, and as has happened with many he could not but see the brighter side of Indian or Hindu civilization by contrast. We find him saying in a lecture which he gave on the very next day after his landing in Bombay :--

“Is there anything in English Christianity which is essentially superior to all that I saw in other parts of the world? Can I say that the English people, by means of their superior religion and morality, have attained that high condition of the soul which is represented in the Gospel of Christ as the kingdom of Heaven? I say, No, far from it. England has not realized the Christian kingdom of God. But still there are Christian virtues, and these certainly cannot fail to excite our interest. There is much that is good and pure in the doctrines of the Christian nation, and in their practice too. But I cannot say, after having studied Christian doctrines and Christian life in England in the way I could do during my short stay in that country, that on the whole England as a religious nation is superior to the other nations of the world: rather my conviction is that England has yet much to learn from India, as India has yet much to learn from England.”

With regard to what England and India should learn from each other, he says: ‘That I believe, is just the thing which, England must accept from India. And what is that but the very spirit of devotion and prayer which Jesus Christ tried to inculcate? The Christian, in order to be a true Christian, must have not only outward works of charity, practical righteousness, and

moral rectitude, but also he must have a devout and prayerful heart. Let, then, India learn from England practical righteousness. Let England learn from India devotion, faith and prayer.'

This Christian charity and practical righteousness Keshub had seen embodied in England in innumerable institutions of social and national service, and above all in its homes, and hence in order to give effect to this lesson that he had learnt, Keshub, as was his wont, established as soon as possible a society which he named 'The Indian Reform Association' for 'the social and moral reformation of the Natives of India.' It had a far wider basis than the Brahma Samaj, and though its principal workers were Brahmas, it was meant to unite all Indians for the common purpose of social and national service. It had several branches such as Female Improvement, Working Men's Institute, Temperance, Cheap Literature etc. In all these lines it did a great deal of work both for the poorer and the higher classes. Females among the upper classes particularly, in spite of the purdah, took advantage of the educational institutions started for them. Under its management Keshub started a pice paper 'the first enterprise of its kind in India,' which soon became a great success. A magazine for women was also started and societies were formed for them to meet and discuss various topics of general interest. Temperance work was carried on by means of lectures, a Band of Hope and various representations to the Government which were not without some fruit. Classes for working-men were started where they studied literature and such other subjects, and taught in their turn their literary teachers among whom Keshub also was one

such things as carpentry etc. In this manner the New Association started by Keshub was a powerful means of developing the social as well as moral life of even those people who were far from being influenced by the directly religious work of the Brahma Samaj, and it brought the educated and the uneducated together in a number of ways.

Along with all these measures of reform and service, Keshub succeeded in getting the Native Marriage Act, now well-known as the Act of 1872, passed after a great deal of agitation and opposition from various quarters. He at first proposed a Brahma Marriage Bill, but in this he was vehemently opposed by the Adi Brahma Samaj, whose marriages were not inter-caste, and who, therefore, in spite of the best legal opinion, recognized their own unidolatrous marriages as valid. Keshub had therefore to be satisfied with such a secular measure although it required from him and his followers the formal renunciation of the Hindu name. This was necessary as the general body of Hindus would not allow the passing of such a Marriage Bill as was at first contemplated, which would have allowed the Hindus to inter-marry with one another. As for Keshub and his Brahma Samaj, it was absolutely necessary that they should have some Act by which their marriages might be regarded as valid. Without that it was impossible for them to achieve any of the national, social or religious reforms on which they had set their hearts. They had gone in boldly for inter-caste marriages, and it was essential that these should be recognised by the law of the land. Thus although it required a very great sacrifice on the part of Keshub

and his followers to abjure the Hindu name, they did so at the call of social and national necessity.

Keshub naturally looked upon this measure as "the greatest triumph of his career as a reformer." To quote Moozomdar again, "Keshub exulted, and was very grateful to Government for passing this measure, which gave legislative sanction to a variety of reforms which were very near to his heart. Bigamy and polygamy were made impossible in the Brahma Samaj. Infant marriages were abolished. The husband was bound to complete the age of eighteen years, and the wife the age of fourteen years. Idolatry was expunged. The two former evils were made penal by the new marriage law. Intermarriages were formally recognised by the legislature, and widow re-marriages were sanctioned as a matter of course."

By this measure Keshub succeeded in hitching the car of social progress in India and among Hindus especially to the forces that were governing the progress of mankind all over the world. That the whole of India has increasingly felt the need of some such measure by which Hindus might be freer to move and make progress in matters social as well as political has been realized by the manner in which large numbers of advanced Hindus have given their support to Basu's, Patel's and Gour's Bills, which have been only modifications of what may well be called Keshub's Bill. These latter are measures by which some of the drawbacks of the Act of 1872 such as the renunciation of the Hindu name have been sought to be removed.

But this Native Marriage Act, as it was passed then, had far-reaching consequences on the future of

the Brahma Samaj of which Keshub could only gradually become conscious. By means of it the movement of Keshub had been landed, almost at one stroke as it were and before he became fully conscious of the fact, on the shoal of secularism, where it would have been ignominiously wrecked but for the spiritual genius of its helmsman. The giving up of the Hindu name involved far more than what appeared at first. There was inherent in it a break with the "Brahma Dharma" also, for that name had originated with Maharshi and had now come to be identified with the compilation of the Sanskrit texts selected from the Upanishads by him. Now when Maharshi and his party declared themselves Hindus both religiously and socially, their "Brahma Dharma" and their Brahma Samaj naturally came to be recognized as a mere sect of Hinduism. Keshub could not but see that such a position of the Brahma Samaj was inconsistent with the universal standpoint he had taken and so he had to give it up. Thus when Keshub was forced to take a new position he took it boldly, but he found himself without any religious status whatsoever. For those who married according to the new Act had to declare that they did not profess the Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian, Parsee, Buddhist, Shikh or Jain religion. Keshub and his followers may have thought that theirs was an eclectic religion and therefore they could make such a profession without the least difficulty. In this they were right, but it was only a negative position, for their eclecticism was only nominal and fragmentary, and their right to the Brahma Dharma and even to the Brahma name may well have appeared doubtful in their own eyes, and much more in those of the Adi Brahma Samaj.



The latter had certainly a prior claim to possess the Brahma Dharma and to use the Brahma name, and might urge that with the surrender of the "Hindu" name Keshub and his followers had forfeited these. These were some of the most important consequences of this Act, and they came to light only slowly. As Keshub became aware of them, he gave a different turn to his whole movement in order to save it from what would otherwise have been its inevitable fate of becoming a merely secular affair. Not that Keshub had neglected to look to the spiritual side of the problem of national regeneration before, but it was bound to weigh with him now more than ever, for it was his duty to see that the great freedom he had secured for his nation was not abused.

It has been already said that Keshub was much impressed with the home-life of the English people. It was his desire to incorporate whatever was good in it in the Brahma Samaj and the national life, and therefore he established about this time an institution called Bharat Ashram. In it several families lived together cultivating spiritual and social life and fellowship of the highest kind. It was meant to be a model community for the whole of India, and it aimed at giving such a religious tone to the character of all the inmates thereof as might make them ideal men and women. Its daily devotions, common meals and common social and intellectual culture were all meant to serve that end, and there is not the least doubt that during the five years of its existence it did a great deal of good to many men and women and thus influenced several families for good. Unfortunately this institution had to be closed owing to various causes at the end of five years.

It was in these ways that Keshub was trying to apply some of the lessons that he had learnt from the West, at the same time drawing from his own genius for the purpose of proper adaptation and development of these to the special requirements and needs of the Hindus. Keshub was at no time a mere imitator of the West, and as was said above had returned from England more of a Hindu than he went, and although he had now given up the Hindu name, he was greater as a Hindu than most who so styled themselves.

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**CHAPTER VIII.****FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
MYSTIC LIFE.**

It has been said above that as a result of the passing of the Act of 1872 Keshub was being thrown more than ever upon his own resources, and now that he had taken his stand definitely outside the pale of all orthodox communions, it was absolutely essential for him to direct all his energies toward making his little community so spiritual that it might justify its existence as an entirely separate body. He had further need of doing this because there was already creeping into his movement a spirit of worldliness owing to the secular activities into which he and his followers had thrown themselves after his visit to England. Again, there was among them a daily increasing party, the outlook of which was largely secular, and Keshub might well fear that unless immediate steps were taken to give his movement a new direction, it might suffer a great deal from this secularism. All these causes were sufficient to make him determine to carry his movement a stage forward, and accordingly he set to work at it with all his wonted zeal, about the year 1875.

This was done through two means at first, viz. Asceticism and Inspiration. The first was immediately necessary for the removal of the worldliness that had come over the Samaj, and though it was only negative in its character, it gave effect for the first time to what Keshub had taught in his "True Faith" with regard to the inherent and essential contrast between the life of the spirit and of the world. The other was

the only source now left to Keshub from which to draw what he needed to make his Samaj a positively spiritual movement. Keshub had already delivered a lecture on 'Inspiration' during the anniversary of the year 1873. But what he had said therein was quite abstract and general, and there was very little that was concrete. The question was one to which his mind must have been drawn when he was in England more than ever before by the universal cry all round him for inspiration and revelation as the sole basis of all true religion, and Keshub had to face the problem which is in reality the main one in religion. This lecture was an attempt in that direction.

Keshub had vindicated as early as 1866 'Greatness' and although he had called it then superhuman and supernatural, it was easy to understand it in a rationalistic manner. Now although there was a certain rationalistic element in Keshub's conception of inspiration, there is no doubt that his emphasis on it in this lecture marks an advance, for the very word 'inspiration' was to many an educated and cultured man in those days like a red rag to a bull. He vindicated at the same time the claims of prophets as prophets, and above all the claim of Jesus Christ as the son of God, though he did this too in a rationalistic manner. Those claims were far from being admitted by the learned and the educated and even by a great many in the Brahma Samaj itself. But what he said herein was only the vindication of a general fact or law of inspiration and prophecy. Hence it was indeed a great step that Keshub took when exactly two years after in the beginning of the year 1875 he stood forth before the Indian people proclaiming a special Dispensation in his lecture "Behold the Light of Heaven in India;"

which is itself a prophetic prelude to his later proclamation of the New Dispensation, and which contains that very word several times. The universal inspiration has materialized in a special Dispensation and now Keshub has something more concrete to offer.

In long passages of remarkable beauty Keshub proclaims the new dispensation with its message of the self-revelation of God as 'I am', and its concomitant gospel of universal love. He was quite right in saying that it was not a new and singular creed, for the message of the self-revelation of God as 'I am' is almost primeval in the history of religion. Both the Aryan Rishis and Jewish Patriarchs had declared the very same message long ago, and it had been deeply wrought into the history of the world. But still it must be said that there was a singular fitness in Keshub's proclaiming this message anew, for it was lost sight of both in India and elsewhere. While in India the sense of the perception of the Living Divinity was well-nigh extinguished under the overwhelming burden of superstition, idolatry and pantheistic misconceptions, in Europe and in other countries the same was lost under a nominal assent to the many dogmas and doctrines of the orthodox faith, and the growing materialism and agnosticism of the day. Under these circumstances it was the special mission of the Brahma-Samaj to give witness to the Unseen. It was for this that the Brahma Samaj had come into existence. It was done first by Ram Mohan Roy, and then to a greater extent by Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, and now in Keshub it attained to a fuller self-consciousness than ever before. It was a matter of special culture with Maharshi and became

increasingly so with Keshub at this time. The idea of God as *Satyam*, Reality, which may be said to be the Aryan correlate of the Hebrew "I am" was the corner stone of the worship of the Brahma Samaj, and their worship began with it. It was therefore no wonder that this witness to the Unseen, or practice of the presence of God should assume with Keshub the form of the self-revelation of God, so essential and basic it had been to their religion and life; or that he should have found in it the remedy for that practical atheism which was so rampant both in India and Europe, among Hindus as well as Christians. Again Keshub had found in this message both the Hindu Rishis and the Hebrew Patriarchs harmonizing with one another, and he was thus laying the foundation of that doctrine of the Harmony of Religions which later on became such an important feature of his New Dispensation.

It is in this lecture, which forms a landmark in the spiritual history of Keshub's life as well as that of the Brahma Samaj, that Keshub lays the foundation of what later on came to be known as the New Dispensation. It was here that the idea was first given utterance to, and it was only when circumstances and conditions were quite different and more congenial to the practicable execution of this idea to the fullest extent, as they became after the Cuch Behar marriage, that Keshub did so. Or rather, it was this new character which he had now begun to give to his movement that brought about in course of time all those things which made him more free to evolve and execute the new idea in any way he liked. The seed was sown here, and its growth into a living plant was only a question of time.

Keshub, as said above, had begun to see larger points of contact between Hinduism and Christianity, or rather primitive Hinduism and Judaism of the earliest days, and this he found in the revelation of God as 'I am.' But this could hardly serve his own spiritual need or that of the age. Moreover he could not but see that the world had advanced a great deal since the time of the Vedic seer or Abraham, and to tie up the Brahma Samaj to what these seers had revealed long, long ago was to write its doom. Hence Keshub was forced to take into account what he called the later dispensations of both the Aryans and the Semites, the only two great peoples who have been able to give religions to the world. In this lecture he had said that the new dispensation which he was proclaiming was a development of all the bygone dispensations, and he had to make that claim good in a much more satisfactory manner than he had done therein. He therefore advanced to what he thought was another stage in the evolution of both the Aryan and the Jewish religious consciousness, the second series of dispensations among both these people. This he thought he found in the conception of the Parmatman i. e. the Supreme Spirit of the Hindus, and of the Holy Spirit of the Christians. Keshub may have thought that in identifying the Supreme Spirit of the Hindus with the Holy Spirit as understood by the Christians, he was harmonizing Hinduism and Christianity to a still greater extent than he had done in that lecture.

But there were very serious difficulties in this of which Keshub could not have been altogether unconscious. For in reality the Holy Spirit represents

the third dispensation of the Christians and hence is possessed of all the riches of the second dispensation, viz. that of the Son. While the conception of Parmatman is more or less abstract, that of the Holy Spirit is full of the riches of Christ's life, for He is no other than the Spirit of Christ. Hence the parallelism between what Keshub called the dispensation of the Parmatman and that of the Holy Spirit, not to speak of their identification, is not justified, though he has tried to establish it in the first part of his anniversary lecture called "Our Faith and Our Experiences" delivered in 1876, where he says that it is the worship of this Parmatman that is the integral part of the faith of his Church. \*

After showing the universality of his faith in respect of the harmony which he thought he had found between Hinduism and Christianity in the doctrine of the Supreme Spirit, Keshub shows further how his faith is connected with the third stage of the national religious consciousness viz. the Pauranic period. His words are:—

"The Theists, individually and as an organized community, have not only revived the worship of the Spirit-God of the ancient Aryans, but are found to be possessed in a great measure of the sentiments and feelings of later idolatry. It is not to be denied that Pauranic or idolatrous India has, with all her prejudices and superstitions, and her vast pantheons peopled with millions of divinities, contributed to throw upon the Spirit-God of Aryan India such charming colours as have made Him peculiarly dear to modern Theists."



In saying this, Keshub does not stand forth as an apologist for idolatry, but he does with regard to that and polytheism, its invariable concomitant and source, what he had done with regard to pantheism. Keshub tries to correct both pantheism and polytheism by the light of theism, and thereby wants to divert into its proper direction the powerful instinct that lies behind both these unnatural and illegitimate phenomena of the Hindu religious consciousness.

In this lecture Keshub expresses some of the positive experiences of himself and that of his followers, but he could not say that that was the experience of the whole of the Brahma Samaj or even of the major portion of it. He knew but too well that there was a Brahma Samaj within the Brahma Samaj, and that to identify the two was to commit an act of spiritual suicide as well as to nip in the bud all those great hopes that he had once entertained for the regeneration of his Motherland. Coming events were casting their shadows before, and Keshub was beginning to be convinced that if he at all wanted his work and movement to live, the time had come for a further move from his old and even from his new moorings. He was gradually gravitating more and more towards those vast reservoirs of spiritualities of both orthodox Hinduism and Christianity, and in exact proportion to his doing this he was going further and further from both the old Brahma Samaj of Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, and a large number of his own nominal followers who were too rationally minded and too much after social and secular reform to care for all these new developments which were now being sprung upon them with an ever-increasing rapidity, and which they thought were all for the worse. Keshub was beginning to feel that he had perhaps far

less in common with these men than with the old Brahma Samaj, and it was only a question of time when there should be an open break. Possibly both were seeking an early opportunity, and when it came along with the Cuch Behar marriage, both were not slow in making the most of it. There is a reflection of this sort of feeling in Keshub's own mind in this lecture, and we see it in the following words :—

“Whither is the spirit of God leading India? Towards the Brahma Samaj? I say, No. To deny Heaven that is leading us onward to His Holy Church would argue blind infidelity. You dare not deny that India is marching towards the Kingdom of Heaven. But the Brahma Samaj, as it is, is not God's Holy Church; it has no semblance whatever of the Kingdom of Heaven. Verily, verily, this Brahma Samaj is a ridiculous caricature of the Church of God.”

While saying this with regard to the actual achievement or want of it on the part of the Brahma Samaj, Keshub did not forget to say that he and his followers, and the Brama Samaj in general, and large numbers of educated Indians were in the midst of a national movement which was far greater than the Brahma Samaj. He said that although all these people might object to the Brahma name—and he said that he himself saw ‘no fascination in it’ and ‘would disclaim it if necessary’—they were none the less advancing towards pure Theism. He said that he too was bound to move still further he knew not where. His words are :—

“ Now I tell you plainly we do not mean to stand where we are. Have we then not found the truth? We have, but we need more.”

Thus while the old Brahmic attitude was that they had defined their faith once for ever and consequently their relations towards the older faiths upon which they looked as superstitious and false systems, the new attitude that Keshub now brings with him leaves room for a great deal of growth on all sides and for friendly relationships with the older faiths. His attitude is no more destructive and negative, but becomes positive and constructive. Accordingly he appeals to the Brahmas to stand no more in proud isolation towards Hindus and Christians as they had hitherto done, and asks them even to learn from them. He beseeches these 'elder brothers,' as he now calls both Hindus and Christians, to be no more antagonistic to his movement, and, in the fashion of Gamaliel, the Jewish teacher, who advised the Jews not to persecute the infant Christian Church saying that if it was God's it would live, and if it was not His it would die of its own accord, he prays them at least to refrain from cherishing antipathy to him and to his work, if they could not give their sympathy.

In this manner Keshub from the beginning of the year 1875 had thrown himself into the midst of a great revival that had changed his whole outlook, and his attitude towards the old religions. While he was on the one hand emphasizing asceticism to a far greater extent than he had ever done before, he and his chief disciples practising it in various forms such as cooking their own meals, solitary retirements for the purpose of Sadhan, i.e., spiritual culture in a garden specially bought for this purpose by Keshub and called *Sadhan Kanan*, etc., he was on the other hand laying an equal emphasis on inspiration and yoga or communion, both

of which at this time became special features of his culture and teaching. As in the first revivalistic movement of 1867-1868, the sense of sin, repentance and bhakti were the chief elements of the revival, this time vairagya or asceticism, inspiration and yoga became the principal factors in the forward movement. Keshub's mind was being more and more attracted to this kind of culture practised among the Hindus, and as he had formerly rescued bhakti from its vulgar associations, so now he did the same for yoga which had fallen equally low in the public estimation. Of course he gave his own definitions of both of these, and practised them in his own way, but he had the courage not only to stand by them but to incorporate them in his own religion at a time when they were tabooed in all respectable society, including the Adi Brahma Samaj. As for inspiration which he translated by the term *adesh*, its conception was peculiarly his own, and he stood by it in spite of the greatest opposition and antagonism from all quarters, high and low, old and new, the literate and the illiterate, Hindu and Christian. He was even prepared to see the whole Brahma Samaj wrecked in order to save it, when the time came. He called it at first the voice of conscience, but later on he would not rest satisfied but by calling it 'inspiration'. With regard to it he says in his autobiography known as 'The Jeevan Ved':—

"If there be a voice speaking from inside the heart, men usually call it a ghost. He that is possessed by a ghost hears voices within and outside himself. From the dawn of religious life I have heard such voices, both inside and outside. Yet I have never taken them to be

ghosts. In many instances have I found there is a person within the person, there is a tongue within the tongue, and they talk in different voices, and the voices can be distinguished by the ear.....Whenever I heard this speech of the invisible living Person, I instantly made out it was not the speaking of friends or relatives, nor my own voice, not a truth learnt in some book, nor a memory of the past, nor a picture printed by the imagination.....It requires a disciplined ear to distinguish the two.....Where the faith is strong, there the tone of persons can be heard, there all good results follow."

Thus what with asceticism, inspiration and *yoga*, a marked change was coming over the mind of Keshub, and its effects were felt both on his immediate followers and on a part of the Brahma Samaj. He and his thoughts and work were getting more and more centred round the other world, and he began to dive deep into the recondite questions of Being and Non-being, Flesh and Spirit, etc. There is no doubt his views began to tend towards Gnosticism. At the same time he wanted to make his movement as constructive and positive as possible, and to find points of contact between Hinduism and Christianity. The first thing that he did towards this work of construction was to ~~perfect~~ the four well-known systems of *Sadhan* or spiritual culture, systems which have been practised by almost all the schools of religion in India, *viz.*, *Bhakti*, *Jnana*, *Yoga*, and *Seva*. Instead of Karma he put *Seva* as the modern equivalent of it. He appointed for this purpose four among his disciples who, on account of their special aptitudes for each, were

chosen to make a speciality of each system of culture.

Keshub gave to each of these a course of precepts now embodied in his *Brahma-Gitopnishad*, a remarkable work of original thought in the vernacular. The instruction and the discipline that he thus gave bore wonderful fruit in the lives of three of these men, and as for the fourth, though he left Keshub later on, the only disciple who left him, he too became a very remarkable man who came to have a large following of his own.

In this way Keshub was trying to realize for himself and for his disciples those beatitudes of character which the Hindus have always tried to cultivate. Keshub's daily prayers and worship along with his disciples became again the most important feature of his and their life from this time onwards, and this was done to such an extent that the principal part of the day was spent in worship alone. The state of their mind and the spiritual ferment into which they were all thrown can be understood from the following note that appeared in the *Indian Mirror* of June 11, 1876:—

“Fresh paths of duty and joy, devotion and communion are daily opening before us of which we had perhaps only a dim and distant glimpse, and we have hardly committed one round of spiritual discipline and culture when we are summoned to enter upon another sphere altogether new.”

It was in this year 1876, while he was in the midst of this revival, that Keshub came to know one who afterwards became famous as *Paramhansa*

Ramkrishna. Although unknown to fame at that time, Paramhansa stood already on a pinnacle of spiritual realization, and went therefrom looking on all sides for men with whom he could have spiritual fellowship and praise God for the great mercies which it had been his special privilege to enjoy. Many a man had he seen such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Maharshi Devendra Nath and others, towards all of whom he had been attracted owing to their greatness in various directions, greatness which he looked upon as a special gift of God and as such meritorious and praiseworthy, but he had as yet found few with whom he could have such communion as was the sole delight of his heart. There were times when his poor, rough and unconventional exterior even positively repelled some of these celebrities whom he visited, and often his precious words and still more precious religious experience were like a hidden jewel altogether veiled from their sight and were thus lost upon them. But what was thus lost upon the world could not escape the spiritual insight of Keshub, who, from their very first meeting at the *Sadhan Kanan* where Ramkrishna came searching for Keshub, could divine what a great treasure of the highest Hindu experience lay hidden within this seemingly poor, unmannerly, half-clad and illiterate ~~person~~. In spite of a world of contrast that there existed between the two, Keshub was the first man to appreciate Ramkrishna at his true worth and thus to discover this jewel of jewels for the whole of India by making him known to the public for the first time as a 'Hindu Saint' through his paper. Nothing would show ~~more~~ than this discovery and the life-long

friendship between the two how sound was Keshub's heart to the core, and how genuinely national and Hindu he was in his genius and spirit. Indeed it may be doubted if at that time there were any greater Hindus than these two, understanding by the term Hindu that spirituality and catholicity which has been the principal characteristic of the Hindu race and religious genius at all times. While the friendship between Maharshi and Keshub forms one of the idylls of the Brahma Samaj, that between Paramhansa and Keshub forms indeed one of the most beautiful chapters of modern religious history of India.

As for Ramkrishna Paramhansa, he was indeed, even at this time when he met Keshub, a veritable child, not indeed in that sense in which that word is so often abused, but in that most high and lofty sense in which Jesus Christ uses it applying it to those who are fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. In spirituality, one may well say that he formed a most fitting complement and counterpart to Maharshi's type of spirituality, and between them they covered almost all the types of Hindu spirituality. Nay, Paramhansa constituted almost a new type by himself. Himself a Vedantist, he was perfectly at home in the Hindu pantheon with its multi-million gods and goddesses, all of whom he believed to be so many types of Divine ideas, ideals and attributes, and with the chief of whom he was so to say on terms of the most familiar intimacy. At the same time he did not fail to make the Bhakti of the Bhagwat his own. In addition to this, his desire for the attainment of spiritual culture of all kinds was so great, and so



catholic were his heart and spirit that he failed not to inquire and even to realize, to however small an extent, what the secret of Mohammedanism and Christianity was. Later on he even went the length of criticising the rationalism of the Brahmas which made them stop short at recognizing in Christ an *Avatar* of God.

Much trash has been written about the influence of Paramhansa on Keshub by those who want to pass themselves off as disciples of Ramkrishna, but who know neither Paramhansa nor Keshub truly. The fact is that the friendship of these two great souls was not without much mutual edification, and if Keshub gained more than he gave, it did not in the least mean that he was less great, but it only shows his ever-assimilative and ever-progressive spirit to better advantage. While Ramkrishna Paramhansa was a finished piece of a particular type of Hindu character, Keshub's mind was perfectly open to truth and light from all quarters, and he welcomed this new influence with all the ardour of his soul. To it he owed decided deepening of his character, and this came at a time when he was seeking for himself and for the Brahma Samaj in Mary's devotion to the one thing needful a corrective of the manifold activities of the age with its Martha-like starvation of the ~~spirit~~, a corrective which was typified in a remarkable manner in the example of Ramkrishna, though it was not without an over-emphasis of its own against which Keshub carefully guarded.

Keshub was a born disciple, who had made it his business to learn first and then to teach, and it was here that the secret of his power as a teacher lay.

With regard to this discipleship he says in his Jeevan Ved :—

“ The world is the sanctuary of God. So long as we are to be here, we shall have to acquire piety and the knowledge of God. Therefore I have never looked upon myself as a teacher and never shall. I come as a learner. I am still learning, and for ever shall remain a disciple. The leading idea of the Sikh religion, that of discipleship, is flowing in my blood, and gives vigour to my life. The mornings and evenings teach me. I read from the scriptures of prosperity and adversity. Every object is my teacher, every animal is my teacher and I have learnt a great deal from human nature.”

Another feature of his character that was being developed during these times particularly was that of balance or harmony or what he called synthesis. It was becoming a special peculiarity with him not to develop one side of his character to the exclusion of others. Whether it was in relation to himself, or to the various religions of the world, or to the various sides of life, he wanted to be true to all, and always wanted to maintain the equilibrium of his character as well as to make it progressive. Thus while others were immersed in the secular work of the Indian Reform Association to the neglect of their spiritual culture, Keshub's spiritual sense became aware of the disturbance in the spiritual equilibrium of the Brahma Samaj, and he wanted to restore it. Then again while he emphasized asceticism, inspiration, and *Yoga*, he also tried to develop the virtues of the ideal Hindu householder, *Brihastha*,

and of the ideal citizen. Once more when he dived into the depths of the Hindu religion in order to find out its hidden pearls, he would do the same with regard to Christianity. In this way he was all the while trying to raise the level of the spiritual character of himself and his disciples, and though he was forced by the very nature of things to pay attention to but one side of life or culture at any particular time, the moment that was sufficiently developed he took up the other side, often the seemingly opposite side, and thus redressed the balance, though now on a higher level.

He gives a practical example of this in his next anniversary lecture of the year 1877, significantly styled 'Philosophy and Madness in Religion' in which he pleads for a synthesis of both the philosophic and the poetic side of religion, for the madness that he speaks of here is no other than what is known in mystic phraseology as enthusiasm or what Plato calls 'inspiration' in poets. Keshub had developed this poetic side of his life to such an extent that he was satisfied with no other word for it but 'madness.' He says with regard to it:—

"By madness I mean heavenly enthusiasm, the highest and most intense spirituality of character, in which faith rules supreme over all the sentiments and faculties of the mind. By madness I mean that wild enthusiasm which defies all the opposition of the world and the antagonism of the flesh, and careers boldly in the path of everlasting and eternal progress. The difference between philosophy and madness is the difference between science and faith, between cold dialectics and fiery

earnestness, between the logical deductions of the human understanding and the living force of inspiration such as that which cometh direct from heaven."

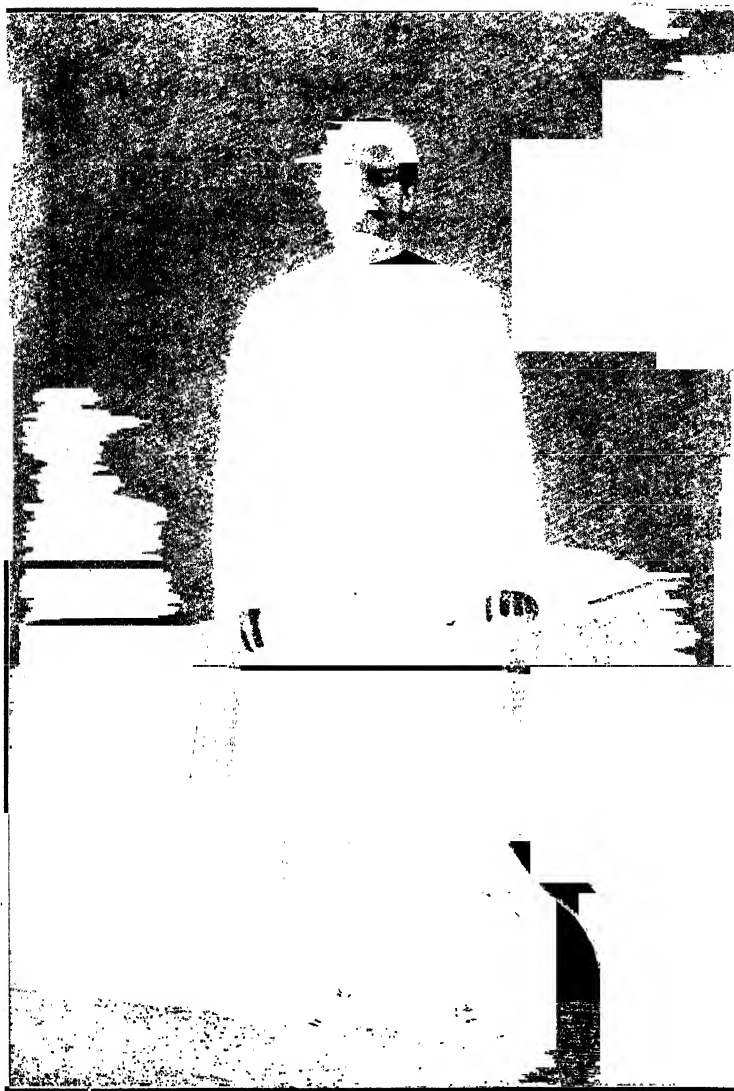
With regard to the change of his own language and manner, both of which had become more and more unconventional, poetic and romantic, and which were severely criticized by the rationalists of his own time, whose respectability and taste were scandalized, he gives the following explanation :—

"When man sees the Divine Spirit everywhere in space, his language too undergoes a great change. It is no longer dull and prosaic, but is animated and poetical. All nature inspires him, and he speaks poetry spontaneously. The universe is to him a veritable garden, redolent of sweet and ambrosial odours, because God is everywhere. His presence makes the earth heavenly. All nature is aglow with divine radiance. This, this is paradise-exclaims inspired madness. Inorganic matter seems to start into life, and mute creation, hitherto hopelessly speechless, begins to speak. The sun, moon and stars speak. The blue canopy of heaven spread above speaks. The clouds that descend in genial and refreshing showers speak. The beasts of the wilderness, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, they all speak. The gentle rill, gently flowing along, speaks. The sweet rose speaks. The stupendous hills and mountains speak. Most marvellous eloquence on all sides! It seems as if a pentecostal shower of inspiration has suddenly come down upon nature and quickened all creation into

eloquence and life. All is poetry. And the mad devotee seized with the contagion of poetry most truly says, he finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything."

While Keshub was adding in these ways to his own character and that of others new elements one after another, and developing it on all sides so that it might attain to the perfection of spiritual culture, he thought of going a step further and applying the principle of synthesis not merely to the various elements of religious character, but to the various religions themselves. For this purpose he separated four of his disciples to study and find out the true secret and meaning of the four great religions of the world *viz.* Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Mohammedanism. All this provoked much comment like almost everything that he did at this time, but Keshub with the 'madness' that had now come over him went on in his way without paying much regard to what the world said. The men who were chosen for this purpose were Upadhyaya Gour Govind Roy, Sadhu Aghore Nath, Pratap Chunder Moozomdar and Bhai Girish Chunder Sen respectively. The second of these, who died at a comparatively very early age during the lifetime of Keshub, wrote an excellent life of Buddha in Bengali, but what is of still greater importance is that he left behind him an example of the saintliest life lived in the Brahma Samaj. The results of the study of Christianity by Pratap Chunder Moozomdar are embodied in his well-known book, called "The Oriental Christ"; a book which has been translated into the German language. Besides this,





**KESHUB CHUNDER SEN.**

he, as an apostle who had more to do with Christianity than any other in the Church of the New Dispensation except Keshub, being drawn to Christ independently of Keshub, has been the leader of a school of thought in the New Dispensation Church and the Brahma Samaj, which had in times past a select following of its own and which is not yet altogether extinct. So great were his powers and personality, and so deeply has he influenced the whole of the Brahma Samaj and the various Prarthana Samajes, that he has been recognized as a leader of religious thought in the Brahma Samaj only next in importance to Keshub. But it is to the labours of the other two *viz.* Bhai Girish Chunder Sen and Upadhyaya Gour Govind Roy that we have to turn for the proper justification of the classification made by Keshub when he appointed these several men for the study of so many religions. The first of these two devoted himself to the study of Mohammedan scriptures, and religious literature, both in Arabic and Persian and found in them a vast field for his activities as a translator, in which capacity he translated almost all the principal works thereof. During the thirty or forty years he lived after he was given this special charge, he translated some forty works, large and small including the Koran, *Hadiz*, a voluminous life of Mohammed, lives of saints and many other works. He has simply flooded Bengal with the copious flow of his pen as a translator, and enriched Bengali literature beyond measure. Many of his works have gone through several editions, and they are read both by Hindus and Mohammedans, both by learned and unlearned. His works are



written in a simple style and the Mohammedans have never failed to pay him high tribute and to look upon him as a great Moulvi. As for Gour Govind Roy, he too lived through an equally long period and did an equally monumental work in the field of Hindu religious literature. However, his work was of a more original kind and hence, though his influence is confined to a smaller number, it has been more potent. His desire to comprehend in its entirety the ideal of the Harmony of Religions, which was with Keshub synonymous with the New Dispensation, led him into profound studies and researches in Hinduism and other religions, and he has thus been able to throw a great deal of new light on many questions of the highest importance, a light the full value of which it will take time to realize. Again, by his great commentary in Sanskrit on the Bhagwad-Gita, which had then fallen into comparative obscurity and which he was one of the first in modern times to bring forward as the great book of the Hindus, by his life of Shree Krishna, one of the first of its kind, and by his other works both in Sanskrit and Bengali, he has contributed not a little to the new revival that has come over the Hindus since his time. In this way the classification that was made by Keshub had its results not only in broadening his own Church which welcomed all this literature, whether Moslem or Hindu, Christian or Buddhist, but was the means of helping in those revivals that have come over some of the orthodox communities, particularly Hindu and Mohammedan, and even made the minds of the followers of religions those broader than ever before by the great example of a Church that could produce such literature without bias or prejudice.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### THE COOCH BEHAR MARRIAGE AND AFTER.

To look mainly to the effects of the Cooch Behar marriage on Keshub's mind and movement, it is enough to say that it proved to be one of the greatest blessings of his life, inasmuch as in accordance with the proverb 'man's adversity is God's opportunity,' Keshub's spirit and genius were freed by it from an incubus by which they were heavily pressed down. The secret of the whole matter, of which so much was made for so many years by Keshub's friends as well as foes both in India and in England, was that Keshub with perfect sincerity of mind took the whole thing, from its beginning in an unthought-of and an unsought offer from the English guardians of the minor Maharaja of Cooch Behar to the world-wide agitation consequent on the marriage resulting in the break-up of the Brahma Samaj, as a providential arrangement. Keshub indeed married his daughter two months earlier than the age prescribed by himself for the Act of 1872, but in this he was guilty of breaking the letter and not the spirit of the law, especially as the consummation of the marriage did not take place till two years later. The first formal marriage was insisted on by the guardians who considered it highly necessary in view of the Maharaja's early departure for England. It is true again that Keshub met half-way the Cooch Behar authorities in arranging a sort of Hindu Theistic marriage, and that was because he was not such a Philistine or fanatic as to think that the Hindu marriage ceremonies, even when shorn of their idolatrous portions, were entirely untheistic or un-Brahmic.

Besides one has to remember that he had to consider the very important fact that the Act of 1872 was not applicable in the Cooch Behar State. It is further true that the marriage as performed was neither Hindu nor Theistic, nor Hindu-Theistic as agreed upon by the parties in Calcutta, but a curious confusion of all these. The priests of Cooch Behar, backed up by the then Dowager Maharani, were dragging in one direction and requiring performance of all the Hindu rites for the proper legality and validity of the marriage, while Keshub and his party were dragging in the opposite direction, taking their stand on the promise given to them by the British Administrator, who was standing helplessly by and watching the conflict, not knowing what to do to keep his promise. It is again true that no body was satisfied with the marriage as it was performed, and Keshub least of all. Miss Collett, who had long been Keshub's greatest friend and advocate in England, after this marriage became his implacable enemy: but Max Muller, who now became much more friendly and sympathetic, wrote to her out of his real knowledge of India:—'I have always admitted that Keshub has been weak, though I could show you that after the first step was taken, he was more helpless than weak.' The fact was that after the betrothal had once taken place, Keshub had necessarily to go all the way.

Though the thing in itself was too small to be made so much of and to have such big consequences as it came to have, it proved to be the last straw on the back of the Brahma Samaj. As has been said above, there was in the Samaj a party which was daily gaining strength, and the antagonistic attitude of which

towards all the spiritual aspirations and developments of Keshub was becoming more and more pronounced. Those who formed this party were men of light and leading in their own way, some of them being great educationists, lawyers, political leaders and social reformers of a very radical type. As regards religion they were mostly rationalists, and reflected in their varied opinions and practice all the latitudinarianism of the Brahma Samaj. There was very little in common between Keshub and these men who, though once attracted by his great powers and fame, were now becoming more and more averse to his search for a *full and certain* faith, which might serve as a lasting foundation for the life of the individual and society. It was but natural that they should feel that all these innovations, devotions and developments of various kinds were only so many eccentricities which, instead of doing any good, were doing real harm to the Brahma Samaj, and that through them the Samaj was again being carried into that vortex of mysticism and quietism so prevalent in Hinduism, from the grip of which they had just begun to save India by means of their intellectual culture. They may have also thought, nay, they did think that Keshub through these means was only trying to exalt himself as a *guru* or a prophet, and that it was their bounden duty to free the Samaj and the whole of India from such antiquated and exploded things as priestcraft and prophetism for ever. Their sole dogma was the absolute independence of the individual, and they wanted to carry this into practice in all spheres of life, religious, social and political. Compared to them Keshub was but a tame social reformer who they thought would not give sufficient liberty to women,

and in their eyes he was an autocrat in religion, for he denied the liberty of the individual to govern his own religious life. In this way he and these men were getting more and more estranged, and it was only a question of time when there should be an open collision. They were undervaluing and undermining his influence and importance, and they were only waiting for an opportunity to overthrow him altogether. Such an opportunity they found in the Cooch Behar Marriage, and they made full use of it. Thus the marriage tore the Brahma Samaj into two factions, and along with it shook to its very roots the soul of Keshub Chunder Sen, the most impressionable and sensitive of them all. It permanently undermined his health, and may have even hastened his death.

But all this was not without its spiritual compensation, which consisted of the great legacy of the Church of the New Dispensation he left to India. The years that he lived after this marriage were the most beautiful and fruitful of his precious life. It changed him much, and good and great as he was before, he became a better and greater man after. It made him put spiritual things first altogether, and his outlook and standpoint became completely spiritual. For so long Keshub had been a victim of his own spiritual strength and security in the infallible guidance of personal inspiration or *adesh* as he called it, which alone he brought forward to justify his conduct. Keshub wrote to Max Muller in the year 1881 about the marriage and what he meant by his inspiration as follows:—

‘I do not claim and never claimed supernatural inspiration. My *adesh* is a command of

conscience as a providential interposition. In plain language I should say this marriage is providential.....I saw the finger of God in all the arrangements, struggles and trials in connection with the marriage.....The trials and difficulties I have gone through are also, I believe, providential. They have educated and disciplined and trained me, and I owe a great deal, and my Church owes a great deal, to my antagonists. The great result of all this agitation is the New Dispensation. I thank God for it. It is a wonder, a marvel.....'

It was not unlikely, therefore, that this false strength should result in real weakness, in which alone true strength can be perfected; and Keshub came to see better the limitations of such inspiration, and even of such Theism as of the Brahma Samaj which made a man self-sufficient. The echoes of such a change we hear of soon after the marriage and the schism that took place in the Samaj, both of which happened during the year 1878. We read in the Indian Mirror Jan. 5, 1879, the following:—

"We love to dwell too much in the domain of our proud eclecticism to appreciate the very definiteness which encompasses other religions. If consolation be the only aim which an afflicted man set before his eye when choosing a religion, then surely an average Brahma has less of that commodity than a Hindu or a Christian."

Again in the issue of January 19, we read:—

"Theism can never be the religion of the world unless it comes clothed in the shape of a

dispensation—a special method to fulfill a special end. We believe the religion of Christ to be pure Theism—the same as we believe.”

## II

At about this time in the month of January, Keshub gave a lecture entitled “Am I an inspired prophet?” The cry raised against him was so great, so many charges were brought against him, the misunderstanding and misrepresentations of his motives were so many, that he thought it was necessary for him to make a public confession of the secret of his life and character, its shortcomings, its principles and its mission. He thought the time had come for him to define his position clearly with regard to his country and his Church, a task which, in spite of its great delicacy, he performed with a fearlessness, clearness and a self-consciousness all his own. In this lecture to the question whether he was to be regarded as a prophet, he gave a clear and emphatic reply in the negative.

He goes so far in disclaiming for himself the position of a prophet and saint, that he refuses to be ranked even amongst the least of them. After defining in this manner his position negatively, he defines it positively in the following way:—

“Then what am I, if I am not a prophet? I am a singular man. I am not as ordinary men are, and I say this deliberately. I say this candidly. I am conscious of marked peculiarities in my faith and character.”

Then he goes on to show how and when this singularity began and how he came under the influence

of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ and Paul from early youth and consequently was led away from the world. He says:—

“I was destined and commissioned by God to be a spiritually-minded and not a worldly-minded man. Having thus spoken to me through these eminent prophets, and taught me self-denial and asceticism, the Lord took me away gradually from the world, and gathered me into His fold and into His Church in the spirit-world. And he said unto me—“I am thy Church and doctrine, I am thy creed and thy immortality, thy earth, thy heaven: I am thy family and thy habitation, thy food and thy raiment, thy treasure here and in heaven. Believe in me.” This “I am” was a strange God to me in those days, for I was not accustomed to such teachings, to such direct inspiration.....The Lord said, I was to have no heaven, but life in Himself: no doctrine, no creed, but a perennial and perpetual inspiration from heaven. Thus the freedom of my reason was completely overcome, and I lost my self-will. At three places had I to sell my freedom. I had to sell my freedom to my country, and then to my Church, and all that was left—the residue of my independence was swallowed up by the all-conquering and all-absorbing grace of God. Thus was I sold for ever. I had no life of my own to lead, no doctrine of my own to teach. I had no right to feel, think, or do as other independent minds did.”

Keshub meant to say that it was God who was leading him in what he did, and that he had no other



course but to follow him. Whatever developments he had made in the religion of the Brahma Samaj, whatever his personal actions regarding his private as well as public life, some of which were furiously protested against by those who had now separated from him, and criticised by the public as well, he said, they all were done according to the guidance he had received from God.

In this way Keshub gives an outline of *his own* personal religion, the religion that he had been able to incorporate in the life of his followers, though not in the whole of the Brahma Samaj or of India, a thing which he hoped would be done in course of time. He says that the religion that he preached was already working all over the land, although people were not conscious of it, and even held an antagonistic attitude towards him and his work. He felt that in time the people of the land would consciously acknowledge what they had been so long unconsciously doing. He says :—

“If it is God’s truth I preach, it is in your heart: in the heart of educated India it has found a place. It will not be possible for you now to efface or eradicate it. There, it has gone into the depths of Indian nationality, never again to be uprooted. The spirit of truth I have been so long teaching has silently, quietly, and almost imperceptibly leavened the heart of educated India. Men know not whence or how it came. It is a wonder and a marvel that, in spite of civilization, there is so much spirituality growing up in the midst of young Bengal and young India. Take away this Brahma Church, take away this grand

Theistic organization, and what is left? No spirituality. It is all secular education and material prosperity. Go where you will—to Bombay, to Madras, to Calcutta, to the Punjab, to Assam, and you will find numerous small temples like small lights glimmering here and there. When they gather their forces together, and concentrate their light, all India shall be illuminated by a general and mighty blaze. This living faith is not contrary to the spirit of Christianity or Mohammedanism or Hinduism. It is religion pure and simple. It is the religion of love, the religion of the Living God.....I have told you I am a sinner. Yet am I commissioned by God to preach certain truths. To give my country these truths is my life's peculiar mission. So long as I live I must do this work."

All that Keshub speaks of here with reference to the spiritual influence of the Brahma Samaj all over the country is perfectly true, for at that time the Brahma Samaj was the sole religious organization that had set itself up as the body where the national reformation and regeneration was to be found. It had effectively stemmed the tide of secularism and materialism, and reclaimed the ground on which new religious and social edifices might be built. And all this was mainly Keshub's work. He had succeeded in carrying young India away from the path of Western materialism and in giving it religious and spiritual life of a very high kind, and he meant to persist in that course and carry it still further. The opposition and antagonism of those, who had seceded from him and had set themselves against

him, only roused his enthusiasm and energy the more, filled him with more of that 'madness,' the nature of which was to defy a world of opposition and enmity as he had defined it two years back.

### III

About two or three months after this, during the Easter-week of the year 1879, Keshub gave another lecture, entitled 'India asks, who is Christ?' Keshub had not revealed in his last lecture all the secret of his life and work, and although he had disclaimed for himself the honours of a prophet, he had left the impression of putting himself forward as an apostle of God. This was indeed too vague, for even a prophet, much more an apostle, connects himself with some previous dispensation of God. Although Keshub had done this with regard to the religion of the Brahma Samaj in general, possibly he felt that he had to do it with regard to himself now that he stood before the Indian nation as an apostle of God. Apart from this motive for this lecture, a motive about which very little can be said with any certainty, Keshub may have felt that the time for which he had been waiting so long to preach Christ Jesus to his countrymen had now come. In a note in the *Indian Mirror* of the same day as that on which he gave his lecture, it was said:—

“The future of India's regeneration must lie through Christ, for he combines in his teachings the spirit of the Rishi which lay in communion, and the spirit of Chaitanya, which lay in the service, loving and devout of the Lord.”

Again, during these days when the hand of the whole world was raised against him, Keshub found what little sympathy he got from such men as Ram

Krishna Paramhansa and Father Luke Rivington, an Anglican monk who later on joined the Roman Catholic Church, men of the old orthodox communions. The latter of these two was in frequent communion and fellowship with Keshub and his friends at this time, and it was as a reply to some of his queries that the lecture was said to have been given.

This lecture was one of the very best that Keshub had given so far, and the impression that it created upon the audience, particularly the most thoughtful portion of it, may be gauged from the fact that the then Lord Bishop of Calcutta and Father Luke Rivington, who were among the audience, were so impressed by it, by the great powers of rare and even divine eloquence and the deep spiritual perception and insight shown in the handling of the subject, that from the time they left the hall they did not utter a single word until they reached the Bishop's palace, some miles off.

Keshub began this great lecture with an apology for taking such a subject, though not a Christian, on the ground that he was constrained to speak of Christ by his love for him, and by the urgent need of India for a proper solution of this problem.

"My love for Christ," he says, "constrains me to speak of him. My loyalty to Jesus is my apology. If any other apology were needed I would invite your attention to India's earnest and impassioned solicitations. Most eagerly and most earnestly she asks—Who is Christ? On all sides there are indications and signs which clearly and unmistakably prove that this question emanates from the

very heart of the nation. It is no wonder that India should ask this question. For is not a new and aggressive civilization winning its way day by day, and year by year, into the very heart and soul of the people? Are not Christian ideas and institutions taking their root in the soil of this vast country?"

Thirteen years before Keshub had put the same question to himself, though then he had not formulated it as a national inquiry. By his reply to it then, partial as it was and purposely so, and by the suggestion of a course of practical conduct for Europeans and Indians with respect to one another, which he made in his lecture 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia,' and by his later efforts to introduce a deeper moral and spiritual life into the Brahma Samaj, Keshub had stimulated the Indian mind to such an extent as to promote this inquiry and make it assume national proportions. Again his own spiritual vision had advanced so far that he no more saw the material or the practical but only the spiritual side of the problem, and separate the two entirely. The question had now become entirely a religious one and he was no more concerned in connection with it about the relations, social and political, of the English and the Indian people. He says:—

"It is Christ who rules British India and not the British Government. England has sent out a tremendous moral force, in the life and character of that mighty prophet, to conquer and hold this vast empire. None but Jesus, none but Jesus, none but Jesus ever deserved this bright, this precious diadem, India; and Jesus shall have it."

But he goes on to say that England has sent after all a 'Western Christ,' as an Englishman, with English manners and customs about him, and with the temper and spirit of an Englishman in him. It is just this which has made people shrink back from Christ and everything connected with him. "But why" he says, "should you Hindus go to England to learn Jesus Christ? Is not his native land nearer to India than England? Is he not and are not his apostles and immediate followers more akin to Indian nationality than Englishmen? Behold, he cometh to us in his loose flowing garment, his dress and features altogether oriental, a perfect Asiatic in everything. Watch his movements, and you will find genuine orientalism in all his habits and manners, in his uprising and down-sitting, his going forth and his coming in, his preaching and ministry, his very language, style and tone. Indeed, while reading the Gospel, we can not but feel that we are quite at home when we are with Jesus, and that he is altogether one of us. Surely Jesus is *our Jesus*."

Having thus differentiated the Asiatic and Oriental Christ from the semi Europeanised figure with which India has been made familiar through the efforts of European missionaries, and at the same time the apostolical Christianity from that of the Western Churches, he says further on that the Hindus had already acknowledged the supremacy of the ethics of Christ, but that was not the whole of his religion. He says:—

"It is not Christ's humanity that is a stumbling block in your way, but his so called divinity. His heavenly spirituality, not his human morality, stands

in the way of your accepting him. The divinity of Jesus—yes, that is the great subject on which I desire to discourse.”

Further on he says :—

“Verily there is such a thing as divinity in Christ. But what is this divinity? Gentlemen, this is a delicate and difficult subject, and though I may run the risk of being unpopular, I must proceed to give you some of those ideals and sentiments which for many long years I have cherished in the depths of my heart.”

Although Keshub had not touched this subject of the Divinity of Christ in his lecture ‘Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia,’ nor during the years that followed, from what he says here it can be seen that the subject was not absent from his mind. It may be that his thoughts with regard to it had not matured, for during these years he was trying to realize practically by *sadhan* or spiritual culture such divinity after analysing it into what he thought were its constituent elements, such as asceticism and inspiration, *yoga* and *bhakti*, etc. He had thus come to understand them in their synthetic fulness much better. And if Keshub himself was not quite clear from the first with regard to this subject, it was far more so with his followers and the general cultured public. For at the time when he separated from the Adi Brahma Samaj, that body and the educated youth of India generally were so steeped in rationalism that to talk of the divinity of any man, however great he might be, would have been considered an act of madness and a relapse into the grossest superstition. Even Raja Ram Mohan Roy had stumbled at this doctrine, and to Maharshi

it was the rankest irreligion for Jesus Christ to have said 'I and my Father are one.' Both these great leaders of the Brahma Samaj, and many within and end without it, understood and appreciated the sublime human morality of Christ, but failed to understand his 'heavenly spirituality' as Keshub calls it. It was Keshub who first among Indians tried to interpret this divinity in an Indian or Hindu way, and although his interpretation was not correct, there is not the least doubt that he made the subject of the divinity of Christ, which was so long tabooed among the educated men of his time, tolerated and even popular. His interpretation of it he gives thus:—

"It appears to me that Christ held earnestly and consistently what I should, in the absence of a better expression, call the doctrine of divine humanity. He not only believed this, but he carried it theoretically and practically to its uttermost logical sequence. I am satisfied that in Christ Jesus there was an abundance of philosophy and logic, before which even the proudest philosophy of modern times must hide her face in very shame. From his very early life he seized this great and philosophical idea of divine humanity, and throughout his career he carried it out, with wonderful logical consistency, in all its bearings, speculative and practical.....Christ struck the keynote of his doctrine when he announced his divinity before an astonished and amazed world in these words: 'I and my Father are one.' I assure you, my friends, that I love Christ and honour him more for the sake of these words than for anything else. For these memorable



and imperishable words furnish an index to the mystery and glory of his real character. Were it not for this bold assertion of identity with the Godhead, I would not honour Christ so much as I do. Half the beauty of Christianity would be marred and obliterated if the principles involved in this important doctrine were eliminated from Christian theology. Christ really believed that he and his Father were one, or he would not have said so. He spoke the truth, unmixed and pure truth, when he announced this fact. 'I can of my own self do nothing.' 'I am in my Father and my Father is in me.' "

Keshub calls this doctrine which stands behind Christ's words "I and my Father are one" etc., that of Divine Humanity, and he explains it by saying that it is nothing but the philosophical principle underlying the popular doctrine of self-abnegation—"self-abnegation in a very lofty spiritual sense." He says that it is this fact that Christ had no distinct self of his own, that he had eradicated it completely, which explains on the one hand his asceticism, his homelessness, and familylessness all of which form such a prominent feature of his teaching and life: and on the other hand his inspiration, perennial and perpetual, and his *yoga* or oneness with God which is all in all whether of his teachings or life. He says:—

"He manifested this divine life in man as no other man had ever done before. There is Christ before us as a transparent crystal reservoir in which are the waters of divine life. There is no opaque self to obstruct our vision. The medium is transparent, and we clearly see through Christ

the God of truth and holiness dwelling in him. When Jesus was asked by one of his disciples to show the Father, he wondered and said: 'You have seen me, and yet you venture to say you have not seen the Father.'..... We see in Jesus perfect self-surrender and perfect asceticism. For if a man has renounced self what more will he renounce?..... This unique character of complete self-surrender is the most striking miracle in world's history which I have seen, and which it is possible for the mind to conceive. "

After explaining in this way some of those verses wherein Christ had declared his oneness with God, he tries to explain some of the other sayings of his such as 'Before Abraham was I am' in which Christ had declared his pre-existence from eternity, in the same idealistic sense. The doctrine of 'Avatar' or incarnation, taking both the words to mean the same thing, he makes one of idealism. He says:—

"If, then, this is the fundamental principle of Christ's life and character, we now find why it is that he almost instinctively felt that he had a spiritual existence. Pre-existence! Be not startled, gentlemen, I proclaim Christ to-day before this assembly as the Prince of Idealists and his religion supreme idealism. He believed in idealism, he loved idealism, he fed upon idealism. But the truest, the highest, the purest type of idealism was that of Christ, and not what generally passes under that name."

Hence his eternal existence according to Keshub was thuswise:—

"Did he not say distinctly, "Before Abraham was I am"? How then, and in what shape, did he

exist in heaven? As an Idea, as a plan of life, as a pre-determined dispensation yet to be realized, as purity of character, not concrete but abstract, as light not yet manifested.....In fact Christ was nothing but a manifestation on earth, in human form, of certain ideas and sentiments which lay before in the Godhead. "

Further on he says:—

"There was disobedience on all sides. It was, therefore, urgently and absolutely necessary for the salvation of man that an example of filial obedience should be manifested. And, therefore, the Lord took away, if I may use the expression, the lower half of His holy nature, that much of it which related to the position and character of the son, and He invested the same with flesh and bones and blood, and sent unto the world. .... In the Old Testament of the world's history you see man's fall through disobedience: the New Testament shows the birth of the obedient child of God, who ever rejoices in doing his Father's will and so came down Jesus in all his glory from heaven to teach us sonship, or true loyalty to the Father.....Thus it is that Christ existed in God before he was created. There is an uncreated Christ, as also the created Christ, the idea of the son and the incarnate son drawing all his vitality and inspiration from the Father. This is the true doctrine of incarnation. Take away from Christ all that is divine, all that is God's, no Christ remains. The residuum is a volatile ethereal something which will not bear even the gentlest touch. "

In several passages of remarkable beauty Keshub proclaims Christ to be not only the Prince of Idealists,

a far greater than Shankaracharya or Plato, teaching perfect Idealism in the doctrine of divine humanity, but to be an *Amsha-Avatar* i.e. a partial incarnation in the Hindu phraseology, or the Logos of Man, Archetype and Exemplar of man, according to the Platonic phraseology. Next he applies the same doctrine of self-abnegation to his relations with mankind, with which Christ had proclaimed his oneness and identity. After explaining this side of Christ's teachings and practice, both of which he embodied in the sacrament known as the Lord's Supper, Keshub says that this is an entirely national and Hindu solution of the problem 'Who is Christ?' He says:—

"You will find on reflection that the doctrine of divine humanity is essentially a Hindu doctrine, and the picture of Christ's life and character I have drawn is altogether a picture of ideal Hindu life. Surely the idea of absorption and immersion in the Deity is one of those ideas of Vedantic Hinduism which prevail extensively in India. The doctrine of absorption in the Deity is India's creed and through this idea, I believe, India will reach Christ. Will he not fulfil the Indian scripture? I am reminded of the passage in the Gospel in which he says, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The Mosaic dispensation only? Perhaps the Hindu dispensation also. In India he will fulfil the Hindu dispensation."

While Keshub thus says that Christ is come to fulfil the Hindu dispensation, he does not fail to say at the same time that he comes to correct it also. This is how he speaks with regard to it:—

"But what is Hindu pantheism? Essentially it is nothing but the identification of all things

with God. I do not mean that you should adopt pantheism as it exists in Hindu books. Far from it. Oh! there are mischievous errors and absurd ideas mixed with it, which you must eschew. Christ's pantheism is a pantheism of a loftier and more perfect type. It is the conscious union of the human with the Divine Spirit in truth, love and joy. The Hindu sage realizes this union only during meditation, and contemplation, and he seeks unconscious absorption in his God, with all his faults and short-comings about him. His will is not at one with the will of God. But Christ's communion is active and righteous, it combines purity of character with devotion. Hindu pantheism in its worst form is proud, being based upon the belief that man is God; it is quietism and trance. Christ's pantheism is the active self-surrender of the will. It is the union of the obedient, humble and loving son with the Father. In Christ you see true pantheism. And as the basis of early Hinduism is pantheism, you, my countrymen, cannot help accepting Christ in the spirit of your national scriptures. You have already seen how in his outward form and appearance, with his flowing garments, he is acceptable to you. Now, you find that even the spirit of Christ draws you through your national instincts. You have a national affinity to the invisible as well as to the visible Christ. Can you deny it? Behold Christ cometh to you as an Asiatic in race, as a Hindu in faith, as a kinsman and a brother, and he demands your heart's affection. Will you not give him your

affection? He comes to fulfil and perfect that religion of communion for which India has been panting, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks. Yes, after long centuries shall this communion be perfected through Christ. For Christ is a true Yogi, and he will surely help us to realize our national ideal of a Yogi. India must, therefore, honour him. You have learnt to give the homage of your hearts to dear Chaitanya, the prophet of Nuddea, and you have also learnt to give honour unto Guru Nanak, the prophet of the Punjab. These are your national prophets, and you do well to love and revere them. And if you look upon Asia as your home, you cannot but regard Christ, too, as one of your Eastern prophets, entitled to your loyalty and attachment. He comes to you after all as a Yogi, full of Hindu devotion and communion. In accepting him, therefore, you accept the spirit of a devout Yogi and loving Bhakta, the fulfilment of your national prophets and scriptures. ”

Next Keshub makes a two-fold appeal, one to the European missionaries and all those who bear the Christian name, and the other to the Hindus. In the first he asks all who would present Christ to India to do it by presenting Christ not as a European, but ‘in his Hindu character,’ as an Asiatic ascetic, whose wealth is communion and riches prayers. To the Hindus he says: ‘The time is coming, and now is when India shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The time has come when you can no longer be inimical or indifferent to Christ. Say unto Christ, as unto your best friend—Welcome! I say emphatically, and I say before you all, that Christ is already

present in you. He is in you, even when you are unconscious of his presence. Even if your lips deny Christ, your hearts have secretly accepted him. For Christ is the "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." 'If you have in you the spirit of truth and filial devotion and self-sacrifice, that is Christ. What is in a name?'

Immediately after this he makes a remarkable confession of his own personal relation to Christ in these words :—

" My Christ, my sweet Christ, the brightest jewel of my heart, the necklace of my soul—for twenty years have I cherished him in this my miserable heart. Though often reviled and persecuted by the world, I have found sweetness and joy unutterable in my master Jesus. Jesus is to me not a hard doctrine. He never was to me a hard doctrine. I am thankful to say I never read anti-Christian books with delight, and never had to wage war with my Christ. The mighty artillery of his love he levelled against me, and I was vanquished and I fell at his feet, saying—Blessed child of God, when shall others see the light that is in thee? Therefore, I say, countrymen, be not as the unbelievers are, do not throw yourselves into the vortex of materialism and scepticism. Christ, your friend, is walking through the streets of this country, carrying the banners of God, the Most High. He exhorts you to renounce self. My countrymen, bravely throw off the scabbard, unsheath the sword, and cut down this abominable self, and establish the kingdom of heaven in your lives. When you have achieved the triumph ye shall rejoice, for the bridegroom cometh. "

Here follows immediately a remarkable appeal to the young men of India from this man who felt himself at this time younger than ever, with an ever-springing youthfulness surging up within him, then most when least expected and when all the world had taken it for granted that he had fallen never to rise again, an appeal which in its peculiar beauty and force shows the secret of this great strength of his, which is indeed one of the chief surprises of his life. Says he :—

“ Young men of India, who are so jealous in the cause of reformation and enlightenment, turn your attention to this point. Believe and remember what Christ has said, and be ready to receive him. He is coming, and in the fulness of time he will come to you. He will come to you as self-surrender, as asceticism, as *yoga*, as the life of God in man, as obedient and humble sonship. For Christ is nothing else. The bridegroom cometh. Do not, like the foolish virgins, fall asleep. But trim your lamps, put on your best apparel, and go forth with the enthusiasm and joy which all oriental nations display upon such occasions, to receive the bridegroom. Oh! the bridegroom is coming; there is no knowing when he cometh. Let India, beloved India, be dressed in all her jewellery—those “sparkling orient gems” for which this land is famous, so that at the time of the wedding we may find her a really happy and glorious bride. The bridegroom is coming. Let India be ready in due season. ”

This great discourse forms a landmark in the life of Keshub Chunder Sen and even in that of the Brahma



Samaj and the religious history of modern India, which began with the religious researches of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the first father of New India. That the Hindus were advancing in their independent understanding and interpretation of Jesus Christ, who was neither of the East nor of the West, was becoming evident to all who were waiting for such a day.

Though this discourse is truly great and holds a place unique in Christian apologetic literature, it is not without limitations. The chief of these was that Keshub had made the same mistake as that with which he charged the missionaries, viz. that of making what was universal, local or national. Perhaps Keshub was right in presenting to the Hindus what he thought was the Hindu aspect of Christ's character, particularly as the missionaries had made the great mistake of presenting Christ and Christianity in such a way as made them look un-Hindu and even anti-Hindu. But Keshub could not put forth this as a complete view of Christ, nor could it be said that there was anything un-Hindu or particularly Western in any of the dogmas or doctrines, mainly the chief one, viz. that which relates to the Divinity or Deity of Christ, for the Hindus have always believed in the fact of God's becoming incarnate, and this to such an extent that it forms the foundation of a large part, if not the whole, of Hinduism. So far as this lecture goes, Keshub had not even so much as touched the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation or the Atonement, and was led more by the apparent similarity between some of the central beliefs of the Vedant Philosophy and a few of the great sayings of Jesus Christ. He shows Christ to be little more than an inspired prophet or rather philosopher, who, by what was nothing more than a

mere stroke of genius, discovered the philosophy of self-abnegation, idealism of a kind which, though the highest and the best, was after all a system of thought. At best as was said at that time, Keshub had discovered a new dogma, the dogma of what he called divine humanity, a dogma, of which the superior worth was to be justified not by mere philosophy, however consistent it might appear, but by practical fruit.

In a note appearing in the Mirror of August 3, called 'Jesus and the Brahmas' we find the vital relation of Jesus as the ideal teacher with the Brahma Samaj, as it had developed under the guidance of Keshub Chunder Sen, portrayed thus :—

“Our regard for Christ is not at all of a philosophical or historical character. It is not literary interest that draws us to him. The affinity is moral and spiritual and not intellectual, that binds us to him. .... We love Jesus, because we find in him those elements of truth and character which we have so long cultivated with special care and earnestness in our own lives, and which we prize most highly. The fact is the Brahma Samaj of India has, ever since its organisation, thrown itself in a special line of religious development which is so peculiar that none can possibly mistake its nature. These very elements of character, faith, asceticism, communion and practical moral obedience are the distinguishing features of Christ's life. Hence is it that such a life soon proved by the natural law of affinity, peculiarly attractive to the Progressive Brahma and his love for Jesus increased in proportion to his growth in the above virtues.....The Brahma Samaj cannot have the least doubt that Christ was a

model man, a model Theist, in so far as he attained to that high degree of communion in which the soul is lost in Divinity. All the teachings and doings of that prophet, his prayers and aspirations, his life and death, all point to him as such."

These words are true except for this that the cause is unconsciously mistaken for the effect, for ever since Keshub Chunder had separated himself from the old Brahma Samaj and even before that, he had put before himself the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as his ideal in all spiritual and moral things, and had directly and indirectly taught them to the whole of the progressive Brahma Samaj. This inspiration had been the main secret and source of the work and worship, of the manifold activities in the social and national service, and of the *sadhans* and researches in the spiritual field, of the whole of the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj, and more particularly of Keshub and his disciples, who constituted the heart and soul of that body. Christ Jesus had been the pole-star of Keshub's life from his early youth, and by his guidance the ship of his soul had been steering. Immediately after his separation from Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore he had shown in his lecture 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia' that India must look to Christ for political, practical and moral guidance. Now he advances a step further, and shows the supremacy of Christ in the metaphysical and mystical regions of man's life. He himself writes as follows with regard to the difference between what he did then and what he does now, in the Mirror of April 20, 1879.

"What the Brahma Samaj did to clear the moral character of Christ more than twelve years

ago, it does with respect to his divinity at the present day; and we have no doubt that the watchword and cry it has given out also correctly represents the deep working of the national spirit. We have no doubt but that India will take the cry raised up by some of her most devout sons and in the end accept Christ as its great teacher. "

#### IV.

In his lecture on 'India asks, Who is Christ?' Keshub had yielded too much ground to pantheism or what he called idealism, and thus had laid himself open to the charge of running into mysticism and Vedantism. This charge had been standing against him ever since he entered the new paths of spiritual life mentioned above. The high view of Christ which he had put forth was itself un-welcome to Hindus and even to the generality of Brahmas, and it was promulgated at a time when Keshub's unpopularity consequent upon the Cooch Behar marriage was at its height. There was thus between him and his critics, whose number was legion, a thick haze of misunderstanding through which all his actions were seen and his motives read, and it was natural that a doubt should be raised in the minds of many whether Keshub's theism itself was not gradually giving way. Years before this Maharshi Devendra Nath had raised the cry that the Theism of the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj had been rendered impure by the introduction of the doctrine of great men, and now the same cry was raised more loudly. At the same time the Christian missionaries were alarmed lest Christianity might be confounded with Vedantism and the character of Christian Theism be compromised by the teachings of Keshub. Thus both these,

the Brahmas and the Christians, took alarm at his new teaching with regard to Christ, and declared that he had forsaken his fundamental creed of Theism. The fact was that Keshub had only tried to emphasize a particular aspect of truth which he wanted to bring home to the thoughtful and religious mind of India, but in doing so he had overlooked the other aspect altogether, and thus had presented an imperfect and unbalanced whole which could not but leave a false impression. He himself may have seen this, for he writes in the Indian Mirror of May 11, of the same year, evidently in reply to some criticism as follows:—

“Let the Indian pantheist behold God everywhere and in him, but let him also, through Christ, accept the distinct personality of manhood, and by separating himself from Divinity, learn that the only way to bridge the gulf between God and man is not the total absorption of the human in the Divine essence, but so to surrender self that for once and for ever his will may coincide with the Divine will.”

Again it was during the course of this year that the same Father Luke Rivington, who had been the direct or indirect cause of Keshub's pronouncement on Christ, wrote a letter or two in the Indian Mirror, vindicating in a powerful way the value of reason as ‘the faculty by which we pass in thought from the existence and the order of the universe, from the phenomena of our moral nature, and from the data of our spiritual consciousness, to the existence of a Being of supreme perfection,’ the re-instating of which faculty in its due position, he said further, was ‘the special glory of Scotch philosophy.’ These two letters

may well have re-awakened Keshub's first love for that philosophy which had been so long in his early days the basis of his Theism, and may have suggested once more to his appreciative mind the greater value of reason or 'common sense' as he had formerly loved to call it, as an easier approach to God for the common mass of mankind, than the mystic and idealistic, pantheistic and *yogic* consciousness that he was developing of late in such an elaborate manner, and which was carrying him further and further away from both the cultured as well as the popular mind.

In addition to this opportune reminder, some of the new discoveries of Science which went towards reducing all the various elements and forces into one final force may well have seemed providential to him who saw Providence in all things. Hence we read in the Mirror of November 2, the following :—

“ The recent triumphs of science have brought forth a curious coincidence of the spirit of the age with that manifested by our forefathers in their sublime worship of nature and her manifestations.....Theism was once proclaimed in India through the lips of the Mother Nature.....In the vast law-worked world we see outward beauty heightened by the harmony of the forces that sustain it, while underneath the great energies is seen the Almighty One that keeps all in check and combination. Science, indeed, has revealed God with greater precision and clearness. ”

Thus Keshub was slowly but none the less surely returning to normal, natural and at the same time universal Theism, which was becoming proportionately more and more Christo-centric also, from the

special course of Hindu pantheism and idealism towards which he had been tending for the last four or five years, and accordingly we find him making a sort of restatement of his Theism, luminous and glowing as it had grown owing to his spiritual experiences, in his anniversary lecture of the year 1880, called 'God-vision in the Nineteenth Century,' in which he not only repudiates the charge of pantheism and mysticism, but at the same time tries to redress the balance in favour of other great men in the style of his previous lecture on 'Great Men,' and thereby to remove any misgivings or misunderstandings that might have risen owing to his last lecture.

In the course of this lecture he says:—

"How grateful must we feel to science for what it has done in this age! It has achieved wonders not only in secular matters, but also in religion. It has brought heaven nearer to the earth and shortened distance.....A long ladder of many steps led to God's sanctuary in days gone by. Science has cut it short. Instead of many steps there is but one step from earth to heaven. One step from mind and matter to God, one step now from the muscles and the nerves, from the eye and the ear to God.....In whatever part of creation we may be, whatever force, material or spiritual, we may arrive at, from there one solitary step leads us into the very presence of First Cause.....In God-vision we see not a long causal chain, connecting objects and beings with a distant Divinity through a series of causes, but a circle in which everything in creation is directly and immediately connected with the central force."

But this Living God is not alone. sitting in solitary glory. He is not only not the abstract First Cause of the scientists or philosophers, or the Nirguna Brahman of the Hindu thinkers, but He is something more than the Saguna Brahman of the Hindu philosophers and of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. He is God with Heaven round about Him, a Heaven that is peopled with living beings who are in perpetual communion with Him. Years before Keshub had made the Theism of the Brahmā Samaj more concrete on its moral and practical side by the doctrine of Great Men. Now he makes it still more concrete, particularly on its spiritual side, being led to it by his spiritual experiences of the decade that followed. While giving expression to this inner experience of his, he says :—

“The whole universe is the tabernacle of the Living God, and everywhere you behold His bright face. Neither is matter God nor is man God, but the Lord as the Personal First Cause dwelleth in all, animating the myriad forces in nature, and brightening its whole face with a heavenly beauty such as no man can fully conceive, no poet can fully describe. But stop, I have said enough concerning the Living God, who reveals Himself unto us in all the ruling and active forces in nature, as the transparent source of their vitality and energy, as the Parent of the universe, suckling and nourishing it. But does this living God manifest Himself alone? God Almighty, art Thou alone? I have ventured to take the dial off this universe, and the wondrous things that lay concealed therein have been revealed. Now I ask



Thee, O Spirit Supreme, is there any one else with Thee, or art Thou alone sitting in solitary glory? Methinks I see another being there. It is my Christ. Yes, it is my Christ who is there. There! Where? On the right hand side of God? No, God has neither a right nor a left hand. When I say, Christ is there, do I mean the bodily Christ? No. Science tells me that the body is altogether decomposed in a few days after death. Surely the body cannot rise up; yet my Christ is there. Oh! it is the Spirit of Christ who is there, reclining on the bosom of the Lord. But the man Christ, they say, was cruelly and ignominiously persecuted and crucified unto death by his enemies, and then he was buried, and heaps of stones were placed upon his body. But there was such a thing as Resurrection subsequently. So we are told in the Gospel narrative. Are you sure of it? Are you sure that Christ after he was buried soared up to the high heavens? Where is the testimony? Who are the witnesses? I am proud to be one of them, for I do verily believe, and am prepared to testify that Christ has risen from his earthly grave. Do I speak with the authority of an eyewitness? Yes, I do. If you think Christ is in the grave, you are certainly dreaming. For where is he to be found on earth? Nowhere. Christ dead and decayed is a deception. Christ risen is Christ indeed. The Spirit of Christ has risen and returned to the Father.....Oh Jesus, Jesus, is thy sweet soul for ever lost to us after only three years' ministration? Child of God, short chapter of thy noble life and teachings, is this all that is left of

thee? Is the great history of thy life a passing dream, a shooting star? O Christ, it is hard to believe thou art no more. Surely thou livest. Thou art in heaven with thy Father, clinging to His bosom. Thy spirit is in thy Father's Spirit. O Jesus! I again say Christ has risen. It is no delusion, no dream, but a reality, a reality which you can all behold and see.....That glorious fact, the resurrection of Christ, every true believer can feel and realize within himself even today, aye at this very moment. Whoever has the spirit of Christ in him must feel a heavenward and Godward tendency. It is Christ drawing the believer's soul towards himself and the heaven where he is. There is a desire to soar upward, to jump up to the heaven above where Christ is living with his God. Who is there that does not feel this? Whenever our hearts are drawn by Christ-force, we are drawn towards heaven, for Christ is not buried, but risen. Not only has he risen, but every one can rise with him and in his spirit to the highest heaven."

It is thus that Keshub, while giving an exposition of the more concrete and spiritual part of his theism, incidentally gives his testimony to the fact of the Resurrection of Christ, a subject to which he had not alluded in his previous lecture. Now he speaks of himself as a personal witness thereof, just in the manner of the apostles and the first disciples who had a vision of the Risen Christ, though with this very great difference that whereas they all believed and knew for certain that Christ had risen with his body untouched by physical corruption or decay, though it had undergone a change which fitted it more for

the spiritual world to which he returned, Keshub speaks of the resurrection of the Spirit of Christ believing that the body had decayed in accordance with the universal law of life, death and decay to which all human bodies are subject. If there is one fact more than another of which the Gospel narrative assures us, nay, without which there would have been neither any Gospel narrative to narrate, nor any Christianity whatsoever, it is the fact of what we may call the physico-spiritual resurrection of Christ. It was that which put a new heart in the souls of the first disciples of Christ, none of whom had at first the courage to stand by him at his trial or crucifixion, but all of whom became possessed with fiery zeal and were turned from cowards into the most heroic men that the world has known. It was because they had seen the Risen Christ, who was not a mere disembodied spirit, but had a body, the sight of whose wounds forced from the unbelieving Thomas his unique confession in the words "my Lord and my God." Again it was that which made a Paul of Saul, turning him from one of the greatest opponents of the new religion into its greatest apostle. Says he with a vehemence, that can be born only of personal experience, in the fifteenth chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians :—

'Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because

we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.'

As for the so-called universal laws of science, there is hardly any unanimity as to what they are, and where one ends and another begins, and it has been often found in the history of mankind that what were once looked upon as exceptional and even supernatural phenomena have come to be known as part of a natural law which was hitherto invisible and unknown. Similarly it may well be that what we know as miracles to-day may be as natural as any other set of circumstances, only the law that is governing them is meanwhile unknown to us. Keshub himself admitted the possibility of miracles, about which we find, in a note in the Indian Mirror of May 4, the following:—

'There is a sense in which no one who believes in the Providence of God, would dispute the possibility of miracles. What we do mean to say, however, is that miracles are not necessary for the acceptance of Christianity.'

As for the lecture, after speaking of Christ by the side or in the bosom of God, Keshub said with regard to other great men:—

"Christ has justly been regarded as a typical man. Every prophet who came down from heaven, as an emanation of spirit-force from the Almighty, went back to Him as Christ did, after fulfilling his mission.....Do you not believe that all true spirits have a mutual affinity, a close kinship towards each other, and together they eat the bread of life and drink the nectar of joy in heaven?.....Behold a whole family of saints and prophets, all united with each other, and united in the Lord! Not only is Christ there, but there are also Moses and Elias, and all the Jewish prophets of olden times, and Paul and all the apostles. And Chaitanya, too, the blessed prophet of India, and the immortal Sakya Muni and Confucius and Zoroaster too. All our

masters are there assembled. Seated on smaller thrones, they surround the throne of the Great Spirit, whose glory is in them and in whose glory they dwell. Oh blessed confraternity of disembodied souls! How they all shine in the light of the central Sun and reflect His glory. Celestial spirit-forces animated by the Supreme Spirit. None lives apart, none can live apart from God. In Him they live and move and have their being. The son has no life apart from the Father. As here all terrestrial and material forces, so above, all celestial and moral forces we call prophets are vivified by the Primary Moral Force."

If the preceding decade of Keshub's life had been passed under the influence of faith which may be loosely translated as *Bhakti*, the second was under that of science which Keshub took as a sort of *Yoga*. Even the new eclecticism or the harmony of religions, as it came to be called later on, was a part of this science or *Yoga*.

In the issue of the Indian Mirror of June 19, 1881, it is said :—

'The method which is pre-eminently the method of the 19th century, the method which gives rise to many sciences and establishes unity among them, the method which we recognise as the comparative method, is exactly the one which shows the New Dispensation to be the outcome of all generalizations in connection with the religious instincts of men.....In India it is a religion meant for human salvation, worked out by a band of devout worshippers under the special guidance of Providence: in England it is a science towards which all intellectuals are being impelled by the age. It seems to us to be a wonderful contrivance of God that He is causing the same principle to be worked out in the East and in the West in the peculiar way of each.....In India it is religion: in Europe it is science.'

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## CHAPTER X. THE NEW DISPENSATION.

Ever since the Schism, Keshub had thrown himself heart and soul and with all his wonderful energy, which was greater than ever before, into the work of creating an Apostolical and Oriental Church. The few followers, those chosen ones who had stuck to him under all circumstances and in spite of everything, sacrificing their all, he wanted to bind in an organization that might bring them nearest to the best and highest in history. For this purpose he multiplied ceremonies, rituals, fellowships and a variety of spiritual *sadhans*. His one idea was to take them higher and higher in the spiritual life, to make them behold God as it were and then to give through them to India and if possible to the whole world what was nothing less than a new religion. Now that he had broken with the world, and the winnowing fan of the Cooch Behar Marriage had separated the chaff from the wheat, as he said himself, his spirit took wings, and soared high in the heavens with perfect liberty. Already he had collected materials for such a flight, but the impulse was wanting, and it came with this break. He opened himself to truth on all sides, taking especially from both Hinduism and Christianity what he found to be the best therein. The religion of the Brahma Samaj was too abstract, too rational and narrow for his own enlarged needs and for those of his countrymen. He wanted to have a religion and a church which should appeal to all classes of people and should have in them at the same time truth from all quarters. Says Moozomdar his biographer:—

‘Nor did he want that the religious food thus administered should be the product of Indian

tradition only. The future Hindu Church must combine in itself the essence of the teachings of the East and the West alike. In Keshub's ideal of a National Church, the religion of Christ composed a very large element, nay more than half the substance.'

He says elsewhere in his biography in connection with the same:—

'Hindu and Christian influences thus began to flow side by side in his life and movements, balancing and correcting the tendencies which they were respectively calculated to foster. The growth of the Christian spirit in the New Dispensation thus became national, and the growth of national Theism was regulated by the spirit and teachings of Christ. This harmonious evolution became an eye-sore to certain Christians and Brahmas. The former could not bear that Christ and his religion should be interpreted nationally, and connected with the traditional forms and instincts of Hindu faith; and the latter were sorely offended that Christ and his teachings should be so much talked about and imported into the colourless creed of the Brahma Samaj.'

It was of such a Church, national and at the same time universal, that Keshub wanted the missionaries of the Bharatvarshiya Brahma Samaj, all of whom excepting one were with him, to be apostles, he himself being one of them. He was preparing them for that purpose all along, and he even ordained them in the month of March 1881 as regular 'apostles,' though he said in the charge he gave them, "I am only one of your band."

It was during the anniversary of the year 1880 that Keshub publicly proclaimed the New Dispensation with some of its characteristic ideas, but he did this in the vernacular language, and there was very little reference to it in his English address, a fact which may be explained only by the supposition that he gave in his English annual addresses his maturest convictions after trying and testing them through severe discipline, and by the fact that he had partially done it in the year 1875, in his lecture 'Behold the Light of Heaven in India.' It may well be that during the year 1880 the idea gathered great strength, and accordingly Keshub proclaimed it during the anniversary of the year 1881, in the address significantly styled "We Apostles of the New Dispensation." In the very choice of the name 'New Dispensation,' Keshub seems to have been actuated by the motive of giving his part of the Brahma Samaj a name that was decidedly more universal than that of Brahmaism with its purely Hindu associations, or any other sectarian name. Again it is the most general and at the same time the most particular of all names: it generalises the particular and particularises the general in religion, and hence it may have well attracted Keshub for its scientific character. In modern times the only great man who made a frequent use of that name was Swedenborg whose works were presented to Keshub by the Swedenborg Society in England in the year 1870, but it is very doubtful if Keshub made any use at all of them.

The lecture begins with a short but beautiful prelude, after which Keshub gives an explanation of "We Apostles" of the title. Hitherto and particularly



during the last two or three years after his lecture "Am I an inspired prophet?" Keshub had stood much before the world, and although he disclaimed for himself altogether the title of a prophet, he had let the world understand clearly that he was an apostle. But that did not make clear his relationship with his immediate associates who were charged with being his blind followers, and in relation to whom alone the title of prophet which he was charged with claiming could have real meaning. As if to give the lie once for all to such a charge, Keshub defines his relationship with his disciples, followers and intimate associates whom he calls his 'brother-apostles,' by the title itself of this lecture, wherein he announces the good tidings of what is according to him nothing less than a New Dispensation.

As regards the charge of claiming divine honours in the same connection he says:—

"Surely people would say that in including our new creed in the category of the world's dispensations we are trying to arrogate to ourselves honours which only Moses and Jesus can claim.....But who, I ask, covets prophetic honour and authority? They say I do. I say I do not. Again and again have I said I seek not the prophet's glory. I contend not for prophetic honours. Yet am I not ashamed of what I have said regarding my exalted office as an apostle of the New Dispensation. In spite of reiterated remonstrances, it has been whispered already that we are trying, not to glorify the Dispensation, but to glorify ourselves. If Christ was the centre of his Dispensation, am I not the centre of this?"

Ungenerous and untruthful critics have insinuated that as Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews, so am I ambitious of being honoured as the king of the Indians—of the Bengalees, at any rate. It is certainly not fair or kind of our critics to say so. Shall a sinner vie with Christ for honours? God forbid! Jesus was a born saint, and I a great sinner. Blessed Jesus! I am thine. I give myself, body and soul, to thee. If India will revile and persecute me, and take my life-blood out of me, drop by drop, still, Jesus, thou shalt continue to have my homage. I have taken the vow of loyalty before thee and I will not swerve from it. God help me! These lips are thine for praise, and these hands are thine in service. Son of God, I love thee truly. And, though scorned and hated for thy sake, I will love thee always, and remain a humble servant at thy blessed feet. Yet, I must tell you, gentlemen, that I am connected with Jesus' Gospel, and occupy a prominent place in it. I am the Prodigal son of whom Christ spoke, and I am trying to return to my father in a penitent spirit. Nay, I will say more, for the satisfaction and edification of my opponents. I am not Jesus, but I am Judas—that vile man who betrayed Jesus into the hands of his infuriated persecutors. That man's spirit is in me. The veritable Judas, who sinned against truth and Jesus, lodges in my heart. If I honour Jesus, and claim a place among his disciples, is there not another side of my life, which is carnal and worldly and sinful? I am Judas-like so far as I love sin. Then tell me not I am trying to exalt myself."

It is in these words that Keshub not only denies for himself the claims and honours of a prophet, but defines his position to be that of the prodigal son and even of Judas. No words could be clearer than these, or more damaging to his position as a prophet if he ever in the remotest corner of his heart cherished a desire for such recognition. To speak of Jesus Christ in the strain in which Keshub had been speaking for the past fifteen years in India at a time, when the very name of Jesus Christ was both a foolishness and a stumbling block not only to the Hindus but even to the majority of the Brahmas, and to speak of himself as a vile sinner, a prodigal son, nay, even a Judas in this land, where the very first step to recognition as a prophet or an *avatar* consists in being recognised as perfect, and where the sense of sin which was so very systematically cultivated by Keshub was looked upon by even such men as Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and Paramhansa Ram Krishna as an unhealthy mental disease, all these raised an effectual and permanent bar in the way of his recognition as a prophet, and it was a bar of his own making.

Whatever his foes or friends might say, Keshub did not claim to be a prophet in the old sense of the term. According to him the very character of the Dispensation he had been announcing forbade any one from holding such a position. Says he in the same lecture :—

“My individuality is lost in the community that forms my Church. This dispensation will not tolerate any form of egotism. It hides me in my brother-apostles.....It will probably be said that each dispensation has a central personality, and

that, therefore, willingly or unwillingly, I must permit myself to be treated as a Moses or a Chaitanya. Let me tell you that this seems impossible. For we represent a new dispensation. Its distinguishing feature is its immediacy, its denial of a mediator. While other dispensations have their special mediatorial agencies between God and a sinful world, here we have no such thing, no intercessor, no mediator.....Upon every Theist the new gospel imposes the inviolable vow of direct worship. This is the peculiarity of the present dispensation, and in this, more perhaps than in anything else, it differs from all other dispensations. There is indeed no place for a prophet-mediator in this dispensation."

Keshub next goes on to speak of some of the chief characteristics of this New Dispensation, which, besides immediacy, are its inclusiveness of an all-embracing eclecticism, its synthetic character and its subjectivity.

In the course of this lecture Keshub traces at length the logical sequence between his New Dispensation and the Mosaic and Christian Dispensations. He bases it on the prophecies and anticipations of Christ and Paul, and tries to trace the line of development from Mosaic Conscience to Modern Science. He calls himself and his brother-apostles "Hindu apostles" of Christ and "modern Pauls", whose "Acts" are only one more chapter of the universal Gospel of Christ. He represents himself and his co-workers as those who are trying to spread the Kingdom of God in India, doing away with all obnoxious distinctions of race and nationality in the manner of Paul and uniting

all through love in one vast brotherhood. He even goes so far as to draw out a 'long line of succession' from Moses, Christ and Paul through minor prophets, holy fathers, ministers and missionaries to himself and his brother-apostles, whom he calls the last and least.

From this point he goes on as follows:—

"But why do I carry the chain of logical sequence down to these days and this hour? Shall I not also carry it up to the days of Greek philosophy and Hindu devotion, yea, to the earliest childhood of the world, when Adam in sweet innocence adored the Supreme God? I trace the second Adam from the first. The first Adam, I say, made the second Adam a logical necessity... .."Paradise Lost" made "Paradise Regained" a necessity.....Behold the beauty of this chain of logical sequence from Adam to Christ, and from Christ down to modern times! How all prophets and reformers, all scriptures and dispensations, are linked together in the unity of a vast synthesis, each growing out of national exigencies in the fulness of time, and all following in the regular order of sequence according to recognised laws of thought!"

After dealing thus with the synthetic character of the New Dispensation, wherein he traces its connection in general with all the Dispensations, and with the Mosaic and Christian Dispensations in particular, he takes up another of its characteristics, viz., subjectivity. He speaks with regard to it as follows:—

"It aims at synthesis, and it aims at subjectivity. It endeavours to convert outer facts and

characters into facts of consciousness. It believes that God is an objective reality, an Infinite Person, the Supreme Father. In the same manner it believes in the objectivity of all prophets and departed spirits, each a person, a child of God. But the recognition of the objective side of truth is not the whole of philosophy or theology. There is a subjective side as well.....God is not only a Person, but also a character. As a Person we worship Him. His Divine character we must assimilate to our own character. True worship is not complete till the worshipper's nature is converted so as to partake of the nature of Divinity."

After explaining subjectivity at length, he says that this idea of spiritual assimilation and absorption is perfectly Christian as well as perfectly Hindu, appearing among the latter in the form of *yoga*. He says it is this *yoga* faculty which will help both the East and the West to supply those deficiencies of spiritual character and life which they both are showing at present, and it is through this that the East will enter the West, and *vice versa*, and thus both will become one. To both Christians and Hindus, he appeals to superadd the excellences of each other, and thus attain perfect spirituality and character. While exhorting the Hindus to assimilate whatever is good in Europe, he says:—

"Honour Christ, but never be 'Christian' in the popular acceptance of the term. Christ is not Christianity. In accepting the former take care you do not accept the latter. Let it be your ambition to out-grow the popular types of narrow

Christian faith, and merge in the vastness of Christ. Neither should you become 'Christian', nor should you simply aspire to be 'Christ-like' for then you would represent the lower strata of spiritual life. Advance to a higher ideal, my friends. Be Christ. Do not rest satisfied with anything short of this. I say again, be Christ. Incorporate him into your being; import him bodily into your own consciousness. Make him your flesh and blood. Let us all be so many Christs, each a small Christ in his own humble way."

And then, as if he were summing up the secret of this subjective synthesis, he says with regard to Christ in the same connection:—

"It is in him and through him that we are reconciled to God and to all truth, and therefore to all dispensations and prophets. If Christ means, as every true Christian alleges, the reconciliation of human with Divine will, then let there be no war or discord in his name, but 'peace on earth and goodwill among men.' If you have the true Christ in you, all truth, whether Jew or Gentile, Hindu or Christian, will pour into you through him, and you will be able to assimilate the wisdom and righteousness of each sect and denomination. Accept the prince of prophets, and you will find in him and with him all prophets, Eastern and Western."

Next Keshub sums up all these characteristics of the New Dispensation in the following passage which is indeed remarkable for its beauty and force:—

"Such is the New Dispensation. It is the harmony of all scriptures and prophets and dispensations. It is not an isolated creed, but

the science which binds and explains and harmonizes all religions. It gives to history a meaning, to the action of Providence a consistency, to quarrelling churches a common bond, and to successive dispensations a continuity. It shows by marvellous synthesis how the different rainbow colours are one in the light of heaven. The New Dispensation is the sweet music of diverse instruments. It is the precious necklace in which are strung together the rubies and pearls of all ages and climes. It is the celestial court where around enthroned Divinity shine the lights of all heavenly saints and prophets. It is the wonderful solvent, which fuses all dispensations into a new compound. It is the mighty absorbent, which absorbs all that is true and good and beautiful in the objective world. Before the flag of the New Dispensation bow ye all nations, and proclaim the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man. In blessed eucharist let us eat and assimilate all the saints and prophets of the world. Thus shall we put on the new man, and each of us will say, the Lord Jesus is my will, Socrates my head, Chaitanya my heart, the Hindu Rishi my soul, and the philanthropic Howard my right hand. And thus transformed we shall bear witness unto the New Gospel. Let many-sided truth, incarnate in saints and prophets, come down from heaven and dwell in you, that you may have that blessed harmony of character in which is eternal life and salvation."

After this Keshub in finishing the lecture appeals to his brother-apostles to hold to the truth that



has been vouchsafed to them under all adverse circumstances.

## II

Keshub had, some years previously in his lectures 'Behold the Light of Heaven in India' and 'Our Faith and Experiences' made it clear as he does again in this lecture, that he and his co-workers were representing what was nothing less than a New Dispensation, even the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit. It is true he had not boldly announced it as such before the years 1880-1881, although he had used the word more than once in his previous lectures. In his lecture 'Our Faith and Experiences' he had tried to show, what we may call now after him, the logical sequence between their faith and experiences and the whole of Hinduism from ancient times down to his own days, showing at the same time their connection with the Christian Dispensation. But it is in the present lecture that he traces a connection between both the Mosaic and the Christian Dispensations and what he calls the New Dispensation, in a much fuller manner. He even goes the length of calling himself and his brother-apostles 'the Hindu Apostles of Christ' and 'modern Pauls.' It is true he stops short at the word 'Christian,' but in this he resembles not a few Christian thinkers of all ages. About eight years before this, Dean Stanley, upon whom perhaps more than any other Keshub looked as his real peer in spiritual matters, and for whose appreciation and approval, he would have cared more than for that of the whole world, had given a lecture on 'Christian Missions' wherein he had paid a great tribute to Keshub and his work in India, and had set forth practically the same

ideal. Keshub doubtless reached this position in his own independent way, though perhaps he was not quite uninfluenced by the spirit of the broad-minded Dean. How close the correspondence is between what Keshub says in that particular passage, wherein he exhorts his hearers to be Christs but not Christian, and what Dean Stanley says in this lecture referring to the conversation between St. Paul and Agrippa, may be seen from the following:—

“He (St. Paul) does not insist on the word (Christian): he does not fight even for this sacred title: he does not take it up as a pugnacious champion might take up the glove which his adversary had thrown down: he does not say ‘I would that thou wast a Christian.’ In his answer he bears his testimony to one of the gravest, the most fruitful of all theological truths—that it is not the name but the thing, not the form but the reality, on which stress must be laid: and he gives the most lucid, heart-stirring illustration of what the reality is. ‘I would that not only thou, but all those who hear me were (I ask for no ambiguous catchword or byword, but) what you see before you: I would that you all were such as I am, upheld by the hopes, filled with the affections, that sustain my charmed existence.....This, whether you call it Christian or not, is what I desire to see you and all the world. Such as I am except these bonds.’ That is the state to which St. Paul desired to bring all those who heard him. That, according to him, was the description of a Christian. No doubt if he had been pressed yet further, he would have said that he meant, ‘Such as Jesus Christ, my Lord.’”

How must it have rejoiced the great heart of the good Dean to read, if he did (for he died in 1881 soon after this lecture was given), this echo of the sentiments expressed by him some years before, an echo which reverberating through the Hindu and Asiatic consciousness of his own friend Keshub Chunder Sen, now came back to the West with an added strength and ring of its own, and what a cause of thanksgiving it must have been to him to see such a singular fulfilment of his own prayer, which he offered at the end of his sermon in these words:—

“We would to God that not only those who hear me but all on whom the services of this day, far and near, have any influence, may become, at least in some degree, such as was Paul the Apostle, such as have been the wisest and best of Christian missionaries, except only those bonds which belong to time and space, not to the Eternal Spirit and the Everlasting Gospel of Jesus Christ. We can not wish a better wish, or pray a better prayer to God on this day than that amongst the missionaries who teach, amongst the heathens who hear, there should be raised up men who should exhibit that type of Christian truth and of Christian life which was seen by Festus and Agrippa in Paul of Jesus.”

It would not be true, however, to say that because Keshub put before himself and his hearers the ideal to be so many ‘little Christs,’ his understanding of Christ was altogether orthodox. No doubt he looked upon Christ as the supreme ideal of God-life or ‘God-consciousness’ as he called it in this lecture, and to be a little Christ meant with him the highest fulfilment of all religious and spiritual life. Christ was to

him not only the ideal Teacher or Exemplar of 'India asks, Who is Christ?', but was the Ideal Man, Divine Man, who was to be assimilated, absorbed and incorporated into each self according to the method taught by himself in the blessed Sacrament, called the Eucharist. Keshub was unconsciously pronouncing his Dispensation to be Christo-centric even in this very lecture when he said "If you have the true Christ in you, all truth, whether Jew or Gentile, Hindu or Christian, will pour into you through him, and you will be able to assimilate the wisdom and righteousness of each sect and denomination": and when he urged all to be so many Christs. Only he took two years more to be fully conscious of this fact when he proclaimed Christ as the centre of his Church to the whole world. Where Keshub exactly differed from orthodox Christianity was in his attributing to Christ not an objective but a subjective divinity. He says therein, "What Christ claimed and revealed in his own character was only subjective divinity, not objective Deity. He was God-consciousness, not God. He was a partaker of the Divine nature." He tried to give an explanation of the 'objective Deity' in his next lecture 'That marvellous mystery, the Trinity,' but so far as this lecture and his present position was concerned, he had not yet definitely crossed the bounds of Unitarianism to step into what he then called Uni-Trinitarianism.

About three years after this lecture was given, Max Muller, in a lecture on Keshub delivered soon after his death, made several long quotations from it and added:—

"Two points only seemed to me of real importance in the teaching of his last years, first,

the striving after a universal religion and the recognition of a common substance in all religions: secondly, the more open recognition of the historical superiority of Christianity as compared with more ancient forms of faith. This was his pearl of great price. To him it changed the whole aspect of the world, and gave a new meaning to his life. That the principle of historical growth or natural evolution applied to religion also, as I had tried to prove in my books on the Science of Religion, was to him the solution of keenly felt difficulties, a real solace in his own perplexities."

In 1881 Keshub started a paper which he called "The New Dispensation" in addition to the others he had already with him long since. He devoted this solely to the elucidation of his new ideals and doctrines, and he himself edited practically the whole of it. In the issue of June 2 of that year, writing on "Pioneers of the New Dispensation" he says:—

"John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. Always a John precedes a Jesus. Each dispensation has its precursors. Heaven-appointed heralds usher it in. There is an upheaving of the mind, a fermentation, an agitation: preparatory struggles and premonitory symptoms manifest themselves, workers as if sent in advance clear the way and prepare the public mind. And then, when all is ready, the promised Dispensation appears on the stage, not too soon, nor too late. All Dispensations recorded in history illustrate this truth, and the New Dispensation forms no exception to the rule. For more than a quarter of a century, signs of spiritual liberalism of a

revolutionary character have been witnessed in the world of thought, and various movements have been set on foot, more or less unsectarian and eclectic, with a view to make men's faith more catholic and less narrow. In the West, the Broad Church School and the more advanced Unitarians in the van, and the numerous scientists of the age whose name is legion in the rear, have fought successfully with narrow Calvinism, and widened the basis of Christianity so as to include science and philosophy. In India, the Brahma Samaj and English education have proved chiefly instrumental in liberalizing Hinduism and imbuing it with the spirit of Christ. More direct and special agencies for the synthetic union of all churches and Dispensations have come to operate upon the development of theological science, and in more definite shapes has the literature of eclectic religion organized itself. Foremost among these is the Science of Religion, or Comparative Theology, which is the leading forerunner of the present Dispensation. All honour to that noble Apostle of Theological Science, Prof. Max Muller, who, uniting in himself the Christian scholar and the Hindu Rishi, has discovered a ground of scientific unity between Eastern and Western faith! Next in importance stand the well-known and popular series of works on "Non-Christian Religious Systems" published under the auspices of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In this series are included Hinduism and Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism. The able writers who have contributed to the

series have not only dispassionately analysed those systems, but have boldly pointed out parallelisms between Christian and Non-Christian thought and sentiment. Such a course of theological instructions, coming from a recognised Christian association, can not fail vastly to influence the age for the reception of the new Gospel of harmony. Another helpful publication put forth in this direction is the *Sacred Anthology*, a "Book of Ethnical Scriptures" by Mr. M. D. Conway, in which, as the title imports, is collected the wisdom of all ages and all sects, and which may therefore appropriately serve as a scriptural handbook of the present Dispensation. The only other pioneer we shall mention is the cultivation of the Oriental Literature, a circumstance which has contributed greatly to unite Asia and Europe and especially India and England in literary and theological confraternity. These are the blessed heralds appointed by Providence to clear the way of the New Dispensation, and establish its kingdom in the present age."

### III.

As was natural all such utterances of Keshub with regard to Christ and his God-vision alienated him still further from many of the Brahmas, as well as not a few of the Unitarians and Theists of the West. Many among these had become furious with him since the Cooch Behar marriage and his lecture 'India asks, who is Christ?' and only a few days before the lecture entitled, 'We Apostles of the New Dispensation' was given, Keshub had felt moved to write in the *Indian Mirror* of January 16, as follows:—

"The fact cannot be denied that one of the chief causes of this theological warfare between

Eastern and Western Theists is Jesus Christ—that ever fertile source of quarrel between man and man. Deists and Theists must differ materially concerning the Prophet of Nazareth. Those who have reasoned Christ away, and those who have found their way to him through prayer certainly belong to different schools of thought.”

On the other hand he was criticised by Christian Missionaries, and in further elucidation of what he meant by logical sequence in reply to one such criticism he wrote in the Indian Mirror, February 6, as follows :—

“ In his lecture on ‘ We Apostles of the New Dispensation,’ Keshub said that whenever a new dispensation came, it followed as the necessary logical conclusion of the premises laid down by antecedent dispensations. As in ratiocination the conclusion is evolved out of the major and minor premises, so each dispensation is evolved out of the previous dispensations in which it was involved.....The fact is that ideas and prophets come one after another in logical sequence, and when taken together they prove the complete economy and scientific unity of God’s dispensations.....The present dispensation is the inevitable logical result of Christ’s teachings. In Divine thought the two are united. The one is evolved out of the other. The Christian dispensation is incomplete without St. Paul, without Luther, without Knox, without the Apostles of the New Dispensation. They are all so many ideas and characters evolved out of Christ. Our contemporary asks—Whence these apostles? We reply—from God, and we may add from Christ.”



Although as yet Keshub was not quite free intellectually from Brahmic confusions between Great Men and God-Man, he was, as always, sentimentally and practically ahead of his doctrinal position, and hence along with his brother-apostles, he performed among others the ceremony of the Holy Sacrament calling it 'the New Sacramental Ceremony,' after modifying its form slightly to suit the Hindu mind and his new eclecticism. He gives the following account of it in his paper 'The New Dispensation':—

"Jesus! Is the sacramental rite meant only for those nations that are in the habit of taking bread and wine? Are the Hindus excluded from partaking of the Holy Eucharist? Wilt thou cut us off because we are rice-eaters and teetotallers? That cannot be. Spirit of Jesus! That cannot be. Both unto Europe and Asia thou hast said,—eat my flesh and drink my blood. Therefore the Hindu shall eat thy flesh in rice and drink thy blood in pure water, so that the scripture might be fulfilled in this land.

'On Sunday the 6th March, the ceremony of adapting the sacrament to Hindu life was performed, with due solemnity, in accordance with the principle above set forth. The Hindu apostles of Christ gathered after prayer in the dinner hall, sat upon the floor upon bare ground. Upon a silver plate was rice and in a small goblet was water, and there were flowers and leaves around both. The minister read the following verses from Luke XXII:—

"And he took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my

body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me.

"Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for you."

'A prayer was then offered, asking the Lord to bless the sacramental rice and water :—

'Touch this rice and this water, O Holy Spirit, and turn their grossly material substance into sanctifying spiritual forces, that they may upon entering our system be assimilated to it as the flesh and blood of all the saints in Christ Jesus. Satisfy the hunger and thirst of our souls with the rich food and drink thou hast placed before us. Invigorate us with Christ-force and nourish us with saintly life.

'The Lord blessed the rice and blessed the water.

'And these were then served in small quantities to those around and men ate and drank reverently, and the women and children also ate and drank, and they blessed God, the God of prophets and saints."

Two or three months after this ceremony was performed, they performed another that was called "The New Baptismal Ceremony" or "Immersion in Jordan Water." This was preceded by one called "The Ceremony of Overcoming Temptation." He says:—

"What began with Fire ended with Water. The typical destruction of carnality was naturally followed by the symbol of the new birth. Fire killed and consumed the old man. Baptism evolved the new man".

The Baptismal ceremony was performed by immersion in the tank called *Kamal Sarovar*, i.e., the Lily Tank attached to the house of Keshub. In the beginning Keshub addressed his disciples as follows :—

“ Beloved brethren, we have come into the land of the Jews, and we are seated on the bank of the Jordan. Let them that have eyes see. Verily, verily, here was the Lord Jesus baptized eighteen hundred years ago. Behold the holy waters wherein was the Son of God immersed. See ye here the blessed Jesus, and by his side John the Baptist, administering the rite of Baptism, and behold in the sky above the descent of the Holy Ghost. All three are here present, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, spiritually united. Pilgrim brothers, mark their union to-day on this hallowed spot, and see how the water shineth in celestial radiance.”

Next he adds to the ceremony something of a Vedic element in the shape of a long apostrophe to *Varuna* beginning with “ O thou Great Varuna, Water of Life, Sacred Water, Mighty Expanse of seas and oceans and rivers, we glorify thee. Thou art not God, but the Lord is in thee. Thou art full of the beauty and glory of heaven : each drop revealeth the Divine face,”...and after reading the whole of Matthew III, adds a Vedantic touch in the shape of an explanation of ‘the true secret of baptism’ as follows :—

“ Why did Jesus plunge into the water of the river ? Because he saw the water was full of God. The Omnipresent Spirit of God he saw moving upon the face of the waters, and in every drop sparkled Divinity. In such holy water, in the Jordan of divine life, was Jesus immersed.

And as he dipped into the water he dipped into Divinity, and straightway he came out of the water, full of new or divine life, and the Holy Spirit overhead announced his acceptance by God as his "beloved son." Thus in him was the Father glorified, and likewise the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Behold my brethren, the water before us is full of the Lord, and blessed are they who are baptized in it, as was Jesus of Nazareth."

What happened immediately after is thus described:—

"The Minister anointed himself with flower-oil, and went down into the water. Standing with his head above the water and reverently looking upward he thus prayed! "May I behold Thy bright and sweet face, O God, my Father, in the water that encompasseth me! Convert this water into the water of grace and holiness that I may be immersed in life everlasting. May Thy beloved Son abide in my soul! May John the Baptist be here to administer unto me the sacred rite! And may Thy Holy Spirit hover over my head and inspire me!" After this he thrice immersed himself, saying "Glory unto the Father" "Glory unto the Son" "Glory unto the Holy Ghost." To magnify the three in one he dipped once more, saying, "Blessed be *Sachchidanand*! Truth, Wisdom and Joy in One!"

Others also after him went through the Immersion and then the whole ceremony which was called by Keshub the opening of a 'new epoch in the history of Indian evangelization' came to an end with women and children, after immersion and a short prayer,

carrying home the vessels which were filled with the water of the tank.

In addition to this particular ceremonial approximation to primitive Christianity, and the very careful endeavour to seek ritual contact between Christianity and Hinduism, Keshub took upon himself a task which may be called one of Christianizing Hinduism and Hinduizing Christianity. Accordingly he sought more and more fellowship with the more spiritual among both the Hindus and Christians, and he began to sympathize deeply with such Christian missions as the Oxford Mission and the Salvation Army, missions which worked in an original apostolical manner. He was the first to welcome the Salvation Army in India and helped it in every way in the troubles which it met with from the Government at that time. He also sympathized deeply with the Indian Christians in their efforts to nationalize Christianity. In regard to them we read in the Indian Mirror of May 15, 1881:—

“Should the Native Church of Christ thus proceed in a purely national spirit, with national resources and traditions and customs, they may meet, some day, on friendly terms with the army of the New Dispensation, and co-operate, so far as is possible, in establishing the Kingdom of Heaven in the land.”

A little later in a reply that he wrote to an appreciative criticism from Indian Christians, he calls them “our brethren in Christ,” “unto us the visible tabernacle of Christ in India,” and “kinsmen and co-heirs in Christ Jesus,” and says further on:—“We only trust and pray that the Merciful Lord may

strengthen our attachment, and so adjust our mutual relations that we may co-work in advancing His cause and establishing His Kingdom in this land. The New Dispensation is verily a Dispensation unto you as well as unto ourselves. In it the living Christ will unite with the Prophets and Saints of India, and fulfil in wondrous ways the prophecy of a Euro-Asian Church. You are right in welcoming this Dispensation as a light from heaven, which is drawing India towards Christ and God. You are also right in holding that we "have not quite found the truth yet." Truly we are yet very far from the Kingdom of Heaven, and see as through glass darkly. You complain, brethren, of our metaphorical language. As we have been brought up in the school of Christ, and have learnt literature at his feet, we cannot possibly renounce the habit of talking in parables and indulging in the sweet poetry of faith.....In the next place allow us to observe that truth is not exclusive but all-inclusive. Christ includes Chaitanya. Hence the impossibility of separating the one from the other. We belong to Christ and not to any body of Christians. Therefore we abjure the Christian name, and prefer to call ourselves Christ's Hindu disciples, and not Christians. We have all things in Christ, all Scriptures and all Saints, and therefore we deny exclusivism."

How far the efforts of the Bengali Christians of those days to organize a National Church of Christ under the name of the 'Christo Samaj' under the leadership of the late Kali Charan Banerji, himself a great friend of Keshub, were due to the example set by Keshub's church and such suggestions as these of the above-quoted note, it may be difficult to

say, but there is not the least doubt that the Indian Christians both in Bengal and elsewhere were influenced a great deal by them. The Rev. T. H. Whitmore writes of those days as follows:—

“ I happen to remember something of its (The National Church) inception in the metropolis of the Indian Empire. I was in Calcutta in the earliest days of this National Church movement. There was another movement taking place at the time, which rather threw into the background the demonstrations of the National Church. Those were the days when the thoughts of that great Indian religious leader, of whom I desire, having known him well, to speak with profound respect, were taking tangible shape. I refer, of course, to Baboo Keshub Chunder Sen and the New Dispensation. Of that I need not speak further than to say, that while the National Church approved most highly of its social and religious reforms, its ethical monotheism, while terribly destructive of the hereditary misbeliefs of Hinduism, finding no place for the doctrine of the new birth, the atonement, and the deliverance of men from the guilt of sin, could not of course commend itself to the pioneers of the National Church; but on the contrary *it stirred them up* to point out a more excellent way.” (The italics are ours).

At about this time when the members of the Oxford Mission, which had been started in India only a few years previously, were feeling rather discouraged, Keshub wrote the following heartening words:—

“ The Oxford Mission seems to be somewhat quiet, if not inactive. There is surely nothing in

the signs of the times which is calculated to discourage our brethren.....But from our Oxford brethren we have always expected to hear fresh tidings and new ideas, new, we mean, to India. Fathers, saints, hermits, asceticism, vows, apostolical simplicity, protracted devotion, and all about the Primitive Church we long to hear. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so doth India pant after the refreshing lessons and lives of the Rishi-like Fathers of early Christianity. Here is a new field. Let the Oxford missionaries enter, and others too, if they will."

In trying to enlist the sympathy of Christian missionaries in what he calls 'our progress in Christian spirituality and devotion,' Keshub writes: "Should not the New Dispensation occasion rejoicings in all Christian Churches in the land? Should not every Christian sincerely rejoice that his Hindu brethren are at last coming to his Captain, drawn by the Holy Ghost, and that hundreds are boldly acknowledging those truths which he has been long preaching? How great should be the joy among Christian missionaries of all sects that almost without any effort on their part, 'India is organizing a national movement, in the fulness of time, towards primitive and apostolical Christianity?'"

Again when a Conference of the Bishops of the Anglican Church in India was to be held in Calcutta, he wrote a letter to the Bishop of Calcutta and Metropolitan of India, in which he suggested to him the following points:—

I. The importance of raising the tone and standard of Christian piety and righteousness among the higher classes of Christian residents in India.



- II. Unity in the Church of Christ.
- III. Respect due to India and her institutions :  
and
- IV. Greater sympathy with the natives of the  
soil.

In this communication he writes as follows :—

“In the spread of Christian ideas and sentiments, of Christian devotion and piety in the land, I am deeply interested as you are, though for obvious reasons your interest in the dissemination of Christian dogmas and doctrines must be far more intense. However widely I may differ from professed Christians in dogmatic theology, I yield to none in my anxiety to see the spirit of Christ assimilated to Indian life and character and an everlasting fellowship established between India and England, Asia and Europe, through ‘him crucified’.”

With regard to his position in relation to Christ and the various Christian bodies and particularly to the name Christian, he says in a note named “Other sheep I have ”:—

“We belong to no Christian sect. We disclaim the Christian name. Did the immediate disciples of Christ call themselves Christian? If they did not, wherefore shall we? Not the name, not the form, but the spirit they prized. And so do we. They were of Christ. And we likewise. This, however, the Christians of modern times seem to dispute and deny. Neither the Catholic nor the Protestant, neither the High Church nor the Low Church would admit us into the fold of Christ. “Exclude them, deny them,” is their unanimous cry. We are unclean in their sight, and have no favour. They treat us as outcastes. Some even go so far as to denounce us as enemies of God and of Christ.

Shall we bend our heads before such judgment? We spiritedly decline to do so. For the servant is not greater than the master, and before the ruling of the higher tribunal the lower court must submissively bow. Listen to those remarkable words which the highest authority in the Christian world pronounced and whose eminently elastic liberality has never been surpassed:—"they that are not against us, are for us." Can anything be more catholic? Surely we are not against Jesus Christ: therefore we are for him. Whoso believes in God and accepts Christ as the Son of God has fellowship with Christ in the Lord. To this memorable text of the Catholic faith we shall tenaciously stick, as proving beyond the possibility of a doubt Christ's acceptance of us. There is, however, more positive testimony in the Bible. How explicit is that well known passage? "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." It is we Gentiles of the New Dispensation who are "the other sheep I have," and though we are not Jews, and not of the Christian fold, we too have been brought by Christ, we too have heard his voice, and we too have entered into his universal church. But these Christians love us not, nor do they yet recognise us. The shepherd however knows us. "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine." Christ has found us and accepted us, and we have known him and heard him. That is enough. Is any Christian greater than Christ?"

## CHAPTER XI.

### UNI-TRINITARIANISM.

Besides this approach in fellowship and practical co-operation with Indian Christians and Christian missionaries, Keshub took to the study of the early Christian Fathers in order to learn more about the primitive and apostolical Christianity which it was his avowed design to revive in India uniting it with pure primitive Hinduism. He read such Fathers of the Christian Church as Origen, Justin Martyr, and Tertullian and found in their writings much that he thought confirmed his own interpretation of the Christian Religion, chiefly with regard to the subordination of the Son to the Father, and the presence of Christ *i. e.* the Word of God in all prophets and religions. Much as Keshub always emphasized his national and Asiatic affinity with Christ and apostolical Christianity, instead of looking for full light in this formative period of Christian dogmas and doctrines, he should have found more in common with Athanasius and Augustine, and if at all, he should have sided rather with Sabellius and Sabellianism in as much as the whole of the Hindu idea of Incarnation lay that way, than with Arianism to which the whole of Keshub's Christology amounted after all, a fact which can only be explained on the ground that he was still under the influence, however little it may have been left now, of Unitarianism and Brahmaism of his early youth rather than the Vaishnavism of his birth and earliest breeding. But his ideas were daily progressing, particularly as he was open to truth as few men were, and hence he came nearer and nearer to the orthodox position. He

came to see that he must understand and then explain what lay behind the great doctrine of the Trinity, a subject which had hitherto been tabooed in the Brahma Samaj. While studying it, he wrote a letter to his friend Max Muller on the 9th July, 1881, in which he tried to define his position with regard to the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ as follows :—

“ I stand, as you do, between the orthodox Trinitarians on the one hand and the rationalistic Unitarians on the other. My position is that of a Uni-Trinitarian. My explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity you will find in my lecture on “ Great Men ” and in the later numbers of the “ New Dispensation.” I am so glad and thankful that the spirit of God has helped me to work my way through Hinduism to the point where an enlightened Christianity has brought you. I have always disclaimed the Christian name, and will not identify myself with the Christian Church, for I set my face completely against the popular doctrine of Christianity. Yet I recognise divinity in some form in Christ, in the sense in which the Son partakes of the Father’s divine nature. We in India look upon the son as the father born again. The wife is called *Jaya*, for in her the father is born in the shape of the son. Hence the Hindu, while regarding the father and the son as distinct and separate persons, connects them in thought by some kind of identity. This identity does not merge the son in the father, does not by pure fiction exalt the son to the position of the father, but leaving the absolute relationship intact, maintains nevertheless a unity or likeness of

nature. Looking upon Christ's relation to God in this light we can readily comprehend the divinity of Jesus as contradistinguished from his 'Deity.' True sonship, such as it was in Christ, must be divine."

All these studies of ancient authors, and the interpretations and explanations of the truths propounded by them found their climax in the anniversary lecture of the year 1882, called "That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity." One may well wonder if a subject so abstruse was ever expounded to such a motley audience as that which used to gather once a year to hear Keshub. The connection between audience and speaker was hardly that of a teacher and disciples, or that of a minister and his congregation, but rather that of mutual critics, for there was hardly one in that vast assembly, whether Christian or Hindu or Brahma, who was at one with Keshub in his present thoughts on the subject he was treating. And yet, so great were his genius and power of expression that however metaphysical and recondite a subject might be, he could not only make it so impressive but so interesting and instructive that as an Englishman said 'When Keshub speaks the world listens.' Whether one agrees or not with Keshub's view, there is not the least doubt that the present lecture is, as Moozomdar said, a masterpiece of his rhetorical powers.

## II.

In introducing the subject of the Trinity he says:—

"The Trinity is the treasury in which lies the accumulated wealth of the world's sacred literature—all that is precious in philosophy, theology,

and poetry, which has ever enriched saints and prophets, and exalted individuals and nations in the East and the West, in ancient and modern times. It is the loftiest expression of the world's religious consciousness. It is an unexhausted and inexhaustible mine of wisdom, which still attracts, and will ever continue to attract, fresh explorers. So sublime, so marvellous is this idea of the Trinity that the most gifted divine and the most learned sage in utter amazement exclaim:—What manner of doctrine is this—the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Three in One, One in Three. Verily the Trinity is a precious jewel-box. Fain would I draw out of it that valued necklace which the Lord has reserved for India, that she may put it on, and appear as a beautiful bride ‘adorned for her husband,’ when the time of her redemption draws nigh.”

After speaking of his moral unworthiness to treat a theme so sacred which, he says, he would not have dared to do but for an inner impulse, he goes on to say that it is only through child-like faith and prayer that he has come to the solution he offers, and then adds:—

“In the Trinity School of Asia have I learnt this doctrine of the blessed Trinity. Upon Indian soil have I, like other Hindu souls, lived and grown into this doctrine. With mother's milk we have imbibed it. For surely this theory is as Asiatic as it is European, nay, more Asiatic than European, more Indian than English. It is an Oriental conception, sublime and beautiful. Though it comes to us as a hard and solid

principle of Western thought, massive and colossal, we readily recognise in it the gorgeous colours of the East and the sweet poetry of Oriental devotion. It went from the East to the West, and after centuries it returns to the East, bringing with it a fresh halo of beauty from the domain of thought. Indeed, the Trinity is a doctrine of natural and universal theology, and is not the monopoly of any single age or nation. Though apparently and admittedly a Christian doctrine, it must find ready faith in every unsophisticated heart, and every Hindu who is true to nature and loyal to his instincts and traditions must bow with the profoundest reverence before the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost."

With regard to his knowledge of Christ he says:—

"Christ has been my study for a quarter of a century. That God-man, they say half God and half man, walks daily all over this peninsula, from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, enlightening and sanctifying millions. He is a mighty reality in Indian history. He is to us a living and moving spirit. We see him and commune with him. He permeates society as a vital force, and imbues our daily life and is mixed with our thoughts, speculations and pursuits. That grand man, the Christ of history, divinity in humanity, is not far from any of us. Behold him. Behold the Father and the Son living and moving in us through the Holy Spirit, and daily quickening our lives and by spirit-movements acting and interacting through each other, making

a very heaven within us. We in India are singularly fortunate at the present moment. We are nearer secrets of heaven, and such heavenly mysteries as the Trinity shine more clearly upon us. This may appear to be a delusion but it is not, I can assure you, a visionary's dream: it is science. The Indian world is near the holy kingdom of heaven."

After this he goes on to say how particular nations are favoured at particular periods with a nearer view of heaven, and it is India's turn now to experience such good fortune. Then he begins the subject proper, in the course of which he leads his hearers on the wings of imagination to 'the regions of eternal silence,' and to the 'Strange Being that existed before creation began,' and when there 'was neither aught nor naught,' 'neither night nor day,' as was sung by the ancient bard of the Rigveda. It was out of 'what seemed to be the dark region of death, the Divinity of darkness and silence' that 'the creation sprang'. He in his own beautiful and inimitable way says further:—

"The sun, the moon, and myriad stars in cluster were strewn round high heaven in profusion. And lo! beauty and symmetry, harmony and order, science and law, life and light of love, all came streaming from that one creative fiat—that Almighty Word. They call it *Logos*. Rightly they call it by that significant name. What was it but a sound, a word, a voice, a breath put forth by Infinite Power that created the mighty universe? What was creation but the wisdom of God going out of its secret chambers and taking a



visible shape? His potential energy asserting itself in unending activities? The dormant Will stirred itself and as it stirred itself there came forth world after world, leaping out of the bosom of God. Force there was, but it spoke not, and was speechless. As it spoke, and the solemn fiat went forth, "Let there be light," instantly there was light. That voice, once uttered, has ever since rolled backward and forward through the amplitudes of space, creating fresh forms of life and light, east, west, north and south. Creation means not a single act, but a continued process. It began, but has gone on unceasingly through all ages ever since it began. It is nothing but a continued evolution of creative force, a ceaseless emanation of power and wisdom from the Divine Mind. The silent Divinity began to speak, and His speech, His word, a continued breathing of force is creation. What a grand metaphor is the Logos! The Hindu, too, like the Christian, believes in the continued evolution of the Logos, and its graduated development through ever-advancing stages of life. The Puranas speak of the different manifestations or incarnations of the Deity in different epochs of the world's history. Lo! the Hindu avatar rises from the lowest scale of life through the fish, the tortoise, and the hog up to the perfection of humanity. Indian Avatarism is, indeed, a crude representation of the ascending scale of Divine Creation. Such precisely is the modern theory of evolution."

After showing thus how the Christian doctrine of the Logos, the Hindu Avatarism and Modern Science

are all at one so far as the belief in the gradual evolution of the world from one kingdom to another is concerned, he says that when man reached the stage of a 'lower order of humanity' than was reached when the Son of God appeared, 'the volume of the Old Testament was closed.'

"The New Testament commenced with the birth of the Son of God. The Logos was the beginning of creation, and its perfection too was the Logos,—the culmination of humanity in the Divine Son. We have arrived at the last link in the series of created organisms. The last expression of creation, so far as we have been able to trace it, is Sonship. The last manifestation of Divinity is Divine Humanity. Having exhibited itself in endless varieties of progressive existence, the 'primary' creative force at last took the form of the Son in Christ Jesus."

Immediately after this he asks:—

"But is the process of evolution really over? Have we reached the very last word in the volume of creation? Does the curtain drop as soon as the Son is born? Then is creation an inexplicable enigma, without meaning, without a purpose....All, all required to be saved. If sonship there was, it was bound to develop itself not in one solitary individual but in all humanity. Surely universal redemption is the purpose of creation. God sent His only-begotten Son in order to make all His children, one and all, sons and heirs of God...The problem of creation was not how to produce one Christ, but how to make every man Christ.

Christ was only a means, not the end. He was the "Way." The Lord of heaven and earth came into this world and manifested Himself in the Son, that He might go through the whole length and breadth of humanity, illumining and sanctifying all generations of mankind with the radiance of Divinity. Behold, Christ, Christ, Christ, everywhere, in all ages and in all nations. Here you see the spread of Divine Sonship, like a sweeping flood of light and life, carrying all mankind heavenward. Do you know what this is? It is the Holy Spirit. Yes, after the Son comes the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost drags Christ-life into the hearts and souls of all men, breaking and annihilating the sins and iniquities of ages, and makes all mankind partakers of Divine life."

He explains this by the simile of a triangle as follows :—

"Here you have the complete triangular figure of the Trinity, three profound truths—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—making up the harmonious whole of the economy of creation...The apex is the very God Jehovah, the Supreme Brahma of the Vedas. Alone, in His own eternal glory He dwells. From Him comes down the Son in a direct line, an emanation from Divinity. Thus God descends and touches one end of the base of humanity, then running all along the base permeates the world, and then by the power of the Holy Ghost drags up degenerated humanity to Himself. Divinity coming down to humanity is the Son; Divinity carrying up humanity to heaven is the Holy Ghost; this is the

whole philosophy of salvation....In this plain figure of three lines you have the solution of a vast problem. The Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost; the Creator, the Exemplar, and the Sanctifier; I am, I love, I save: the Still God, the Journeying God, the Returning God: Force, Wisdom, Holiness: the True, the Good, the Beautiful: *Sat, Chit, Ananda*: "Truth, Intelligence and Joy." Has not the Holy Ghost been described as the "Comforter"? Truly He is the heart's joy. Thus the Trinity of Christian theology corresponds strikingly with the *Sachchidananda* of Hinduism. You have three conditions, three manifestations of Divinity. Yet there is one God, one Substance, amid three phenomena.....But remember the true Trinity is not three Persons, but three functions of the same Person."

Next, he speaks with regard to the Divinity proper of the Son as follows :—

"The identity of the Father and the Holy Ghost few will question, but the position of the Son is a subject of controversy. Let us look into this second Person more closely. The Son of God has justly been called God-man. Verily, verily, He is a God-man, but not a man-God.....Here man remains man, and God is only superadded to his nature. Humanity continues to be humanity, but Divinity is engrafted upon humanity. The doctrine of bodily Resurrection, which seems to be the corner-stone of popular Christianity, however untenable on scientific ground, suggests a very important idea. It suggests the continuity of Christ's humanity.....He was intended and

designed by Providence to be unto man a man, a pattern man, a God-man, and so he was, and so he is, and so he shall continue to be through endless ages. He is God in man.....He is humanity pure and simple, in which Divinity dwells. In him we see human nature perfected by the affiliation to the Divine Nature. And in this affiliation we see the fullest realization of the purpose of Christ's life and ministry."

Then while differentiating the older dispensations from the Christian dispensation, he says:—

"The older dispensations had revealed enough of the power and wisdom of the Supreme Father. The New Testament does not reproduce the Old, but only supplies its deficiencies. It reveals the Son, not the Father.....Thus in the New Testament the world had something more, a new illustration of Divine goodness and wisdom, a fresh manifestation of God, not as He is in Himself, but as He lives in the Son.....There was no further need of the Father revealing the Father. What was needed was a new revelation, a revelation of the Son by the Father.....In the Christ of the Gospel we have true Sonship, an example and a blessing unto the world.....The Father cannot be an example of sonship. Only the Son can show what the son ought to be.....God teaches me Divinity. Christ teaches me humanity. What is Christianity but the Religion of Humanity? Or shall I say the Worship of Humanity?.....It is the Worship not of our Father, but of our Brother. Brother-worship! A strange doctrine! Yet perfectly logical. If Christ is the Son of God, the

Son of our Holy Father, he is unto us all a Brother, the sweetest, the purest, the brightest of our brothers. Is he an incarnation? He is an incarnation of Brotherhood, not Fatherhood. He is our holy Brother in flesh. The blessed gospel that gladdened Bethlehem eighteen centuries ago was that unto us a Brother was born.....It is the glory of Christianity that it is not only the religion of Divinity, but also and pre-eminently the religion of Humanity. It gives us the Father and the Brother both. The Father and the Brother have I said? Between the two there is an eternal distinction."

Further on, he says:—

"But the worship of humanity is the worship of man as well as woman. If the worship of manhood is scriptural, that of womanhood too is scriptural.....Has Divinity no representative in the fair sex? Is woman altogether vile, carnal, and earthly? That cannot be. Sweet Mary, thou mother of Jesus Christ, thrice blessed woman, in thee dwells God's womanliness. In thee is embodied the feminine nature of the Holy God. Mother of Jesus! Our mother, the world's mother, we honour thee. Glory, glory unto thee, heavenly woman!.....Why, it may be asked, did Heaven so ordain that the Son of God should be born of woman? Ah! There is deep meaning in this, for what was Christ but the union of manly and womanly excellence? Did he not show in his life and character the double nature of man and woman? How tenderly he felt for his people! How great his solicitude for the little ones

entrusted to his care! Truly he felt for Jerusalem as a mother feels for her children. To the stern virtues of man he added the graces and charms of woman. Mary lived and moved in him, making him a very woman in tender and sweet love...God made Mary a divine woman that His beloved Son might inherit womanly divinity from her,.....If Christ was not an evolution of woman, how is it that the milk of maternal sympathy and forgiveness always flowed out of him towards sinful humanity?...You know Christ as a soldier of God, doing His master's work with firmness, courage and heroism far above the world. But Christ of woman born, a woman in man, you have yet to know.....With Mary's milk Christ had sucked woman's attributes. Oh! that beautiful picture of the Madonna! Mary with her sweet child on her arm! the wonder of art, the perfection of poetry! Thou picture divine, thou teachest us what true Christianity is and what it is eventually destined to be. That picture tells us in the language of prophetic poetry that as every man is evolved out of woman, so shall every man sit at the feet of woman and learn the tenderness and sweetness of divine love.....I hold that woman is the perfection of man, inasmuch as love is the perfection of virtue.....Infinitely higher than any virtue that man can boast of is the sweet feminine love in woman's breast."

In a passage wherein he reaches the climax of this great utterance he says:—

"Can you conceive Christ without Mary? Whatsoever is in Mary is logically included in Sonship. Mark the length and breadth, the height

and depth of the true Christ, the all-comprehending Christ. Large as the Logos, wide as the world, deep as divine humanity, who can measure, who can fathom this Christ? In glorifying Christ we only glorify the eternal Logos. Let all nations vindicate and glorify the divine Logos. The more we exalt the Son, the more we exalt the Father. Therefore does pure Theism go to the fullest extent in glorifying the merits of the Son in the name of the Father. Even the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, it has fearlessly upheld and proclaimed. As the sleeping Logos, did Christ live potentially in the Father's bosom, long, long before he came into this world of ours. As the Lord spoke, the Logos or Reason came forth, and was lodged in creation, not in human beings alone, but even in animals. Wherever there is intelligence, in all stages of life, where there is the least spark of instinct, there dwells Christ, if Christ is the Logos. In this right and rational view do not the Fathers all agree? Do they not speak of an all-pervading Christ? Do they not bear unequivocal testimony to Christ in Socrates? Even in barbarian philosophy and in all Hellenic literature they saw and adored their Logos-Christ. In the midst of this large assembly I deny and repudiate the little Christ of popular theology, and stand up for a greater Christ, a fuller Christ, a more eternal Christ, a more universal Christ. I plead for the eternal Logos of the Fathers, and I challenge the world's assent. This is the Christ who was in Greece and Rome, in Egypt and India. In the bards and the poets of the Rigveda was he. He dwelt in Confucius and in Sakya Muni. This is the true Christ



whom I can see everywhere, in all lands and in all times, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in America, in ancient and modern times. He is not the monopoly of any nation or creed. All literature, all philosophy, every doctrine that is true, every form of righteousness, every virtue that belongs to the Son, is the true subjective Christ whom all ages glorify. Begotten by the 'volition' of Almighty God, as Tertullian says, the Spirit-Christ spread forth in the universe as an emanation from the Divine Reason and you can see him with the eye of faith underlying the endless varieties of truth and goodness in ancient and modern times. He is the *Chit*-christ, pure intelligence, the Word of God, mighty Logos. Scattered in all schools of philosophy and in all religious sects, scattered in all men and women of the East and the West, are multitudinous Christ-principles, and fragments of Christ-life,—one vast and identical Sonship diversely manifested. The one ideal Christ manifest in multiform concrete little Christs Sum, up all that is true and good and beautiful in the life of humanity, and you have the grand Logos of the early Christians, the Christ of Universal Theism. Thus all reason in man is Christ-reason, all love is Christ-love, all power is Christ-power. In this sense we are all Christ's, one and all."

After giving this eloquent description of the Christ whom he identifies with the Logos, and in whom now the abstract idea of the harmony of religions and dispensations expressed in the previous year's lecture is becoming more and more concrete, he appeals in the following passage to Indians to accept

and not to reject Him who is no other than the very Word of God, the eternal Veda:—

“Let not India deny this. My countrymen, there is nothing in such a confession of which ye need be ashamed. I commend to you not the little Christ of little Christian sects, but the grand Christ of universal humanity, the perfect Man, the ideal Son, that was, is, and shall continue to be. Who is there in this assembly that can refuse to do homage to such a Christ? Already he is in you. In every true Brahmin, in every loyal votary of the Veda on the banks of the sacred Ganges, is Christ, the Son of God. The holy Word, the eternal Veda dwells in every one of us. Go into the depths of your own consciousness, and you will find this indwelling Logos, the Son of God, woven warp and woof, into your inmost soul. Whatsoever in you is good and holy is the Son. If an honest Hindu denies this, surely he denies he knows not what. If a pious Hindu fights against Christ, as often alas! he does, he fights against a name, which accident has made bitter and offensive to him. But India, my beloved India, is not, never was, an enemy of the Word. Unto the eternal Logos every true Hindu has sworn fealty. The real recognition of Christ has taken place in India. It is an accomplished fact. Only the nominal recognition remains. Like other nations India too will grow into a fuller acceptance of the doctrine and the spirit of the Logos. When the time cometh India will find out Christ, and Christ will find out India. If Christ is universal Sonship, then undoubtedly

so far as ye are good and true, ye are sons of God and partakers of Christ, and so far is your character 'Christian', in the highest sense of the word. And if you believe in this indwelling Logos, what is there to hinder your proclaiming him your mediator? Surely you cannot reach the Father except through the Son. This necessary logical mediation none can ignore. It exists even where it is not professed."

Alongside of this appeal to the Hindus to accept Christ, he makes another to the Christians and particularly to the missionaries not to confound the Son with the Father, and thus to present India with one more *avatar* adding to the idolatry thereof. He says:—

"And to you, ambassadors of Christ in India, let me say a word of warning. India is sick of idolatry. Add not to the already overcrowded pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses a fresh divinity in the name of Jesus. Never say Christ is the very God of the universe, the Father of all mankind. If you preach "him crucified" as your very Father, you preach idolatry and heresy. The early Fathers are against you. Holy Writ is against you. Christ is against you. Therefore, shun this hideous lie of Christ the Father, and preach Christ the Son. Tell our people distinctly that Christ is not an incarnation like the myriad deities worshipped in this land. If you do not, you incur the tremendous risk of poisoning a whole nation with new forms of idolatry. Beware. Remember you accept a terrible responsibility in preaching to the Hindu people. Here is a nation

that has, for ages, believed that the Father Himself becomes man, and is incarnated in saints and prophets, and that the incarnation or *avatar* is to be worshipped not as the Son of God, but as the supreme Father Himself. If to this nation you offer Christ as a new *avatar*, you plunge a country already darkened with superstition into an abyss of deeper darkness.....Here I stand, a sworn defender of the banner of Christ in India. I will see-God help me! that the pure banner of the Son of God is not polluted by any form of idolatry, and that it does not fall into the hands of the enemy through any remissness on the part of those commissioned to guard it.....I say to the missionaries of Christ in India,—do you bring unto us the Son? India gives you a hearty welcome and falls at your feet to receive the glad tidings. But if you conceal the truth that Christ is the Son of God, our divine Brother, and present him to our people as an incarnation of the Father, appearing on earth as the Father in human shape, like the avatars of Hinduism, we call upon you to quit the land forthwith, for ye are enemies of India, enemies of Christ, and enemies of God. Let it be known throughout the length and breadth of the land that he who, directly or indirectly, preaches Christ as God the Father in human shape, preaches not Christ but anti-Christ, and deserves therefore to be treated as our bitterest foe. Hail sweet Christ! Hail Son of God! Begone idolatry. Preachers of idol-worship, adieu!”

Having thus finished speaking of the Son, he next takes up the question of the work and position of the

**Holy Spirit, whose work, he says, is to supply the power with which humanity moves on the way, that Jesus has pointed out. He says:—**

“ There is no salvation without the Holy Ghost  
 .....Sanctification belongs to the Holy Spirit alone  
 .....Christ is but an example in history, an objective  
 portraiture of faithful Sonship. To convert it into  
 a subjective force something else is needed.....It  
 is only the Spirit that can convert outward truth  
 into inward purity. It is this Spirit that makes  
 Christ, otherwise a mere historical character, a  
 sanctifying power within us.....Do you wish, my  
 countrymen, to become sons and heirs of God?  
 Then you must invoke the very same Spirit by  
 whom the Son of God was baptized eighteen cen-  
 turies ago, and draw your inspiration from the very  
 same source from which Christ drew his. To the  
 Holy Spirit belongs the glory of begetting and  
 baptizing the Son of God, as scriptural history  
 testifies; and to Him and Him alone belongs the  
 power of converting all mankind into sons of God.  
 Thus God sends down His Divinity into the  
 world through the Son: that Divinity reproduced in  
 millions is carried by the Holy Spirit back to its  
 source in heaven. In one favoured spot on earth  
 is the Eternal Son reflected: thence the concen-  
 trated rays of heaven's light are diffused by the  
 inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the length  
 and breadth of the world. Far away in that obscure  
 place, Nazareth, a mighty wave of light rears its  
 head. Lo! it moves the sea of humanity, causing  
 myriad waves of light to foam and sparkle on its  
 surface, and stirring its waters from their deepest

depths into a surging and glowing sea of divinity. Already the Holy Ghost has shaken the foundations of our carnal nature, and brought Christ into us all. Christ is not lo !-here, lo ! there, but within. Truly the Holy Ghost has leavened us with Christ-leaven and established the Logos within us as the Divine Son subjectified. Christ ! art thou within us or before us in the outside world ? A voice answers from the depths of my heart and your hearts, ' Here I am.' Our own consciousness bears testimony to this indwelling Christ, a part of our very nature, a new life begotten by the Holy Spirit. "

After this he goes on to speak of his own Church and Dispensation as the Church and the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit in the following words :—

" All three then have we, the three Sacred Names of the blessed Trinity, one within another, all beautifully interwoven into a perfect unity of texture. We worship the Father, we honour the Son, we are inspired and saved by the Spirit. Our Father is here, our Brother is here, our Saviour is here,—all dwelling in us, an invisible and inseparable triune unity. Who can disunite the united Three ? Who can rebel against one without rebelling against the others ? The Old Testament has sung Jehovah's glory, the New Testament has sung the praise of Jesus, the Son of God. Where is the scripture that sings the name of the Holy Spirit ? Seek it, my friends, in the Church of the New Dispensation which is in India. Judaism has taught us the Father ; Christianity has taught us the Son ; the New

Church will teach us the Holy Ghost. The Old Testament was the First Dispensation; the New Testament the second; unto us in these days has been vouchsafed the Third Dispensation. Unite and amalgamate these three, and you have the Trinity Church of the world. If you take only the first and the second, and ignore the third, you are Dualists, not Trinitarians. Nay, you give the lie to Christ if you believe that with him was closed the scripture of divine revelation. For did he not say in the course of his last words that he would send the Comforter to lead the world into all truth? Why then should you deny this Church of the Comforter, which India has raised in the present age? In this New Church you see the continuity and the completion of what began with Mosaic Monotheism. The Trinity is one logical whole, and the three dispensations must therefore be accepted as an integral and indivisible Church for all mankind. This Church of the New Dispensation, which you see in India, is altogether an institution of the Holy Spirit. Its morality is the command of the Spirit, its prayer is a direct address to the Spirit, its heaven is a tranquil abiding in the Spirit, its wisdom is the inspiration of the Spirit, its church is brotherhood in the Spirit, its apostles are the ordained of the Spirit. Verily, verily, ours is the Church of the Holy Ghost, and the Comforter acknowledges it as His own. And yet this Church harmonizes in beautiful synthetic unity the three elements of the Trinity. The New Dispensation is true to the Father, true to the Son, and true to the Holy

Ghost. *Sat Chit Ananda* is our motto. It shall be India's motto. *Sat Chit Anand* was, is, and shall for ever be India's God. She cannot therefore be disloyal to the Trinity. True to her instincts and traditions, she has been the first to welcome this New Church, the Church that harmonizes the three Dispensations, and she will hold a high place in the jubilee of nations, when this Church will establish her kingdom of love and joy throughout the world. Let India, then, put on her best robes, for lo! "that great city, the holy Jerusalem is descending out of heaven from God." Yes, the New Jerusalem is coming and the glorious vision of John will be fulfilled.....Verily in the New Dispensation all things are new. Already we are breathing the fresh breeze of a new revelation, which gives us new inspiration, new ideas and aspirations, new thoughts and sentiments and new joys. He who places the three in their right positions in his own heart and thus realizes the sweet harmony of the New Dispensation, must see around him, now and here, a new heaven and a new earth opening before him. Glory to India! She has unfolded the new harmony of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and struck the keynote of a new music. A fresh Testament was needed to supplement the Old Testament and the New Testament, and this has been given to us in the present Dispensation.....It does not destroy the kingdom of the Father or that of the Son, but it only superadds the kingdom of the Holy Ghost, thereby completing the economy of human redemption, and renewing and spiritualizing all



pre-existing forms of the world's earlier faith. Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil the law and prophets. So the New Dispensation destroys not, but fulfils the theology of Christ.....Shall we not thankfully rejoice that the vexed problem of a mysterious Trinity has at last been practically solved in this new Uni-Trinitarian Church?"

### III.

Keshub thus defines his position with regard to the Trinity, calling his belief Uni-Trinitarianism and his church a Uni-Trinitarian Church. The idea of the logical succession of which he had spoken in his previous lecture he now develops in a much fuller way, and connects his New Dispensation most intimately with the Third Person of the Christian Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Here lies the great departure he makes from the Unitarianism, both of the conservative and of the progressive Brahma Samaj. Though what he here calls Uni-Trinitarianism is far enough from orthodox Trinitarian doctrine, it is still sufficient to show to the world that this great teacher, after creating and organizing a full-bodied Unitarian Church with a creed, liturgy and compact missionary body, and after twenty years of religious experience, came to the conclusion that Unitarianism, whether Hindu or Christian, was not the last word in religion or theology.

As for the solution that Keshub attempted to give in this lecture, it is neither more nor less than a shifting to and fro among ancient and exploded heresies. His position on the whole is akin to Arianism, the first great heresy of the Christian Church, which is only a form of Unitarianism, though

at times it approached what is called Semi-Arianism. But the fact is that Keshub is not quite consistent with himself. Indeed he was never at his best in philosophic speculation. His heart was always in advance of his head, but the same may be said of the early Christian Church, for it was three centuries before the Church attempted to formulate a rational explanation of its heart's faith. That this attempt was in any degree successful, was due to the fact that it possessed in Athanasius, a man whose heart and head were in entire unison, who gave a most illuminating testimony to the truth he had conceived in his early youth by a life-long fidelity to it under the most adverse circumstances, and whose advocacy more than any other single agency it was, that made the truth expressed in the Nicene creed, the bed-rock of all Christian speculation.

It is true that Keshub in this lecture makes a great advance upon all that he had said before, inasmuch as he identifies Christ with the Logos. In his first great lecture he had called him the Prince of Prophets, and in his later ones he had gone as far as to say that he was in a way the incarnation of the lower half of God's nature, viz., that part which was related to the idea of sonship. He now goes a step further and accepts the Christian and more particularly the Johannine identification of Christ with the Logos as given in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel. Keshub most emphatically admits that Christ is the Word of God, and that it is through Him that God has created the whole universe with its various mineral, vegetable, animal and human worlds, and he sees the presence of the Logos in all prophets,

saints and scriptures of the world. This view of Christ as the Logos is as broad as that of the most catholic of the Fathers of the Christian Church : in a sense it is even broader, inasmuch as the world of the Fathers was nothing compared to the world that was opened up before the wondering gaze of the nineteenth century. But this view, wide as it was, lacked in depth inasmuch as Keshub, carried away by his enthusiasm for the doctrine of evolution, failed to see the great gaps in that process of evolution. The fact is that Keshub, at least so far as this lecture, is concerned, does not take into account the awful abyss between man and God caused by sin, an abyss which can only be bridged by the love of God suffering on behalf of sinful man. It is this which we see in Christ, as he suffers in Gethsemane the agony and the bloody sweat, and, as he endures the awful solitude and shame and pain of the Cross. The divine humanity of Christ is not to be explained as merely a link in a process of Evolution, for, though it brought a higher stage of life in the existence of Man, it did this at the incalculable cost of what is known as the *kenosis*, i.e., the self-emptying of God Himself. And it is in this remedial act on the part of God Himself, in this awful tragedy of sin and its outblotting, that the Holy Trinity reveals Itself. The self-revelations of the Trinity as described by Keshub under the figure of a triangle, has in it no Cross where the Son takes upon Himself the God-forsakenness of Humanity, and, by separating Himself from God unites us to Him, and thereby reveals the depths of life and love in the Eternal Being of God. As represented by him, the process looks more like the *Vaishnavic*

*Lila* or playful enjoyment of God, than the supreme tragedy of man's and consequently God's existence too which it is.

But so far as this lecture is concerned, the point where Keshub becomes most inconsistent with himself and differs most from orthodox Christianity is in the determination of Christ's position within the Trinity. He calls him the Logos, the taking of the form of the primary creative Force, an emanation from Divinity, and the manifestation of the Lord of Heaven and earth. He again calls him the Father's begotten Son, a child, a creature. He maintains that the New Testament which is the higher of the two revelations reveals the Son, and that the Father was revealed by the Old Testament, forgetting the very first principle that the higher could reveal only the higher. In another place in the same lecture he says he upholds even the co-eternity of the Son with the Father, 'though not as a person but as the sleeping Logos,' which lived potentially within the Father's bosom. He calls him the Reason of God begotten by the 'volition' of the Almighty. In another place he calls Christ the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. All this is highly inconsistent with itself and is largely due to the want of a coherent system of thought. It was also due to the remnants of that Unitarianism, which was with him for so many years and which had interwoven itself with all his thought and religious culture. It was this that made him jealous of what he thought was the Unity of God, and made him fail to understand that what is known as the Trinitarian doctrine did not in the least trench on that Unity, but rather filled it with a content and reality without which

the idea of God becomes a mere abstraction. The whole question centres round the fact that God in His essence is Love. If He is essentially and eternally Love, and not accidentally so, *i. e.*, becoming so at a particular time, there must be an object which He loves from eternity, and this object is none other than the one we know as the Son or the Logos. The whole of the first verse of St. John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," stands together, and to try to take one part of it and not another is impossible. The writer of this Gospel says in another place, "God is Love," which means that He is Love in His very essence. This is possible only because He is in eternal fellowship of love with some Other who is not Himself and at the same time is Himself, for without that Other He is as if He were not. It is this that constitutes the mystery of the Trinity, which is a question concerning the very Being of the Godhead Itself, and can at first be apprehended only by faith. It must be realized as a fact of spiritual experience before it can be understood as a doctrine, and it was thus realized in the history of the Christian Church itself. This was vouchsafed to the Early Church in its belief in the Incarnation of the Son in Christ, and it is the same that even to-day in the minds of many among Christians dispenses with the need of any philosophical explanation of the doctrine.

The subject of the Incarnation was one more point with regard to which Keshub thought he had serious differences with the orthodox Christians. It was needless to emphasize that Christ was the Incarnation of the Son and not of the Father as Keshub did, for the Christian Church has never said that Christ is the

Incarnation of the Father, and to say so has been considered by it a heresy. Unfortunately Keshub made so sharp a distinction between the Father and the Son, that he forgot that father and son are correlative terms and that one is impossible without the other. It is the sonship of Christ that makes the fatherhood of God possible, and vice versa. Again it is this too sharp distinction between the Father and the Son, which makes him look upon the second Dispensation, *i. e.*, the Christian Dispensation, as a revelation of the Son and not of the Father. Nothing could be more mistaken than such a view of the two Dispensations, for as a matter of fact the second, *i. e.*, the Christian Dispensation was nothing else but a fuller revelation of God Himself, and it shows Him who appears in many parts of the Old Testament as the Creator of the Universe and the Lord of a particular people, as the Father of all mankind. The Christian revelation is the revelation of the Fatherhood of God, through the life of Sonship of Jesus Christ.

Keshub's sharp distinction between the Father and the Son may have been partly due to his desire to prevent the Incarnation in Christ being regarded in the same light as the Hindu incarnations, and Christ being looked upon as but one more of so many Man-Gods. That he was sure this would happen in the future is evident from the following paragraph that he wrote in his paper, 'The New Dispensation,' some time before the present lecture was given. He says therein:—

“Hinduism is a vast and mighty absorbent. Though extremely jealous as to its own purity and dignity, and intensely anxious to keep off impure

admixtures, it is at the same time remarkably tolerant of heresy. The touch of the Mussalman, the shadow of the Yavana, it regards as an abomination. Yet the orthodox Hindu offers homage to the Pir, and tries to conciliate him. Buddha, an arch-heretic, the great, perhaps the greatest enemy of the Vedas and the Brahmins, can by no stretch of argument be proved friendly to Hinduism. Nay, the ultimate fate of his system, its expulsion from India, remains on the pages of history as an abiding proof of the Hindu's sworn enmity to Buddhism. Yet has Buddha been honoured with an exalted seat in the Hindu pantheon, being co-ordinated with the gods as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu. Already Christ too has been similarly honoured as a prophet and a saint, if not as an incarnation. The time is coming, and does not seem very far, when Christ will be treated as an incarnation and adored as such like other Avatars of Hinduism. This is no idle conjecture, no delusive prophecy. Tolerant and eclectic Hinduism will do unto Christ what it has done unto other saints, and will absorb the leader of Christianity as it has absorbed the founders of other systems of religion. It is destined to do so, and in the fulness of time it shall be done. While lower Hinduism will thus make all prophets into gods and goddesses, its higher and purer spirit will pass through the New Dispensation into the life of Christ, making true Hinduism and true Christianity one thing in God."

That the lecture 'That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity' has been so far the greatest attempt to make

the 'higher and purer spirit of Hinduism pass through the New Dispensation into the life of Christ, making true Hinduism and true Christianity one thing in God' is undeniable, and as such it forms a landmark of no ordinary character in the religious history of India and of the world.

## IV

So far as Keshub's true position with regard to the Trinity is concerned, we cannot find a truer estimate than was made by that impartial observer and sympathetic critic, the Rev. Joseph Cook of Boston who was about this time in India, and who saw much of Keshub and cultivated his intimate acquaintance. In regard to what he found, he says:—

"My first lecture in Calcutta was on "The insufficiency of theism." I did not spare the system of Mr. Sen, but I confess I admire the man. If theism is put forward as complete for itself, and as a rival to Christianity, it must of course be criticized: but I think that Mr. Sen himself, as distinct from his scheme of theology, is to be treated with tenderness, and deserves the prayers of the Christian Church. He calls himself a *Uni-Trinitarian*, but I find myself compelled to classify him at present as a Quaker-Unitarian in a Hindu dress. He has a doctrine of the inner light that reminds one of the Quaker mystics, but his views of the person of our Lord are certainly not more nearly orthodox than Channing's. He depends for his knowledge of religious truth on religious exercises continued through three, four and sometimes five hours a



day. I thoroughly believe him to be an honest and devout man. My feeling is not that he should pray less, but that he should study more."

While Keshub was thus coming closer and closer to what he thought to be the apostolical and oriental Christianity as it stood, according to him, before it had become stereotyped in dogma, the Philosophical Eclecticism on which he was trying to build his Church of the New Dispensation, as he said in 1881, was gradually reaching its breaking-point through his own progress in spiritual life as well as through the constant criticism of friendly critics. The most significant notice of this new tendency is found in an article called "Our Dangers" written by way of reply to a sympathetic criticism, from which we take the following:—

"No doubt our creed is a dangerous creed. The New Dispensation is a perilous undertaking. We of the New Church are every moment exposed to a hundred dangers. Apparently we stand on a precipice, from which at any moment we may be hurled into the whirling eddies below. Our situation is critical, for there is only a hair-breadth distance between us and all the great superstitions and errors of the world. It is, therefore, no wonder that our friends should feel nervous about our position and prospects, and constantly warn us... .. We are assured by God there is no such danger. And we shall explain why. There is equal danger in every direction, in the direction of polytheism, pantheism, tritheism, of Buddhism, and Mohammedanism, of Shakticism and Vaishnavism, of rationalism and mysticism. All these forces are pulling us in contrary directions, and

so they are in counterpoise. This is the beauty of eclecticism, and herein lies its security. No other system is free from the danger of being one-sided in time and falling from one extreme to another. The Church of Harmony, the Philosophy of Eclecticism is so well balanced by contrary forces and by dangers that neutralize each other that we have no fear, humanly speaking, of sinking into any school or sect. And it is our conscious security that makes us boldly and confidently use names, words and sacraments which in any other Church would be dangerous, but which cannot but be helpful to us. The centre has no fear of reaching the circumference."

Evidently, like a drowning man Keshub was catching at the proverbial straw, which, however, could by no means bear his weight. To vary the figure, this endeavour to find a centre of gravity for the new Eclecticism in the merest equilibrium of not only two but innumerable opposing forces, which were always pulling in different directions, was unnatural and unscientific. It was not to be expected that a man of such exquisitely fine spiritual nature could ever rest satisfied with the harmony which would result from a multitude of discords. Keshub tried to substitute the word 'unification' for 'collection' of truths, but that too was open to the same objections. A unification of truths without any standard of judgment except individual caprice is impossible. Keshub could not be long blind to this most glaring inconsistency of his whole system, and he accordingly tried to find a remedy against it by providing a centre for this Eclecticism. As he declared in his last great lecture, this centre to

his system, or eclecticism, or harmony, or Church, or by whatever name it was called, was no other than the Person of Jesus Christ who had been from his earliest youth and was to remain to the last days of his life, the mainspring, the chief influence and inspiration of his conscious as well as subconscious life, the very centre and source of his moral and spiritual being, and in whom he found strength and support, life and light.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL AND EURO-ASIAN  
UNITY.

The year 1883, the last year of Keshub's life came and with it its anniversary, on which occasion Keshub delivered his last great lecture, which was very significantly styled 'Asia's Message to Europe.' The choice of the title and the subject-matter he dealt with in it, were in perfect keeping with his character and work as they had been developing during these last years of his life. During these years there had been forming in Keshub's mind what may be called an Oriental or Asiatic consciousness, in contradistinction to the national consciousness which had been growing in the minds of his countrymen and other people. This lecture is the logical culmination of his whole public career which had begun with the lecture 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia;' but in that lecture he had only ventured to speak in the name of India to Englishmen, and not, as now, in the name of Asia to Europe. What had then been treated as a domestic and national problem now assumed the proportions of an international and inter-continental one, with which Keshub, owing to the growth of his spiritual life and experience during the intervening two decades, felt himself competent to deal. The problem that he faced and tried to solve in this lecture was a vast one, indeed the vastest of all problems, and although nearly forty years have passed since it was delivered, the words in which he stated it seem to be truer to-day more than ever before. He begins the lecture in the following way :—

“Whence this plaintive and mournful cry, which so profoundly distresses the patriot’s breast? It seems that a whole continent is writhing in agony beneath the lash of oppression, and sending forth from the depths of its heart a deep wail of woe. And as these jeremiads and lamentations of many nations rise to the skies, the four winds of heaven, like trusted and sympathetic messengers, readily waft them in all directions, and as they deliver their doleful message, east, west, north and south, they appeal to every feeling heart for sympathy and justice. Who is it that weeps? Do you hear? It is India that weeps. Nay, not India alone; all Asia cries. Behold the sweet angel of the East, into whose beauty the very colours of heaven seem to have been woven,—the fair East, “in russet mantle clad,” lies prostrate, a bleeding prisoner! Who can measure the length and breadth, the height and depth of Asia’s sufferings? She has no peace: she knows no consolation. And what is the burden of her complaint? The desperate onslaughts of Europe’s haughty civilization, she says, have brought sorrow into her heart, ignominy on her fair name, and death to her cherished institutions. Many there are in Europe who hold that all beyond the Ural, to the remotest shores of the Pacific, is afflicted with moral leprosy, that Eastern humanity is black as Ethiop’s skin, that the soil of Asia yields nothing but wretchedness and iniquity, and that chaos and darkness, twin sisters, hold their grim sway over the whole land. They say, Asia is a vile woman, full of impurity and uncleanness.....Swayed by these considerations and

actuated by these feelings, Europe has for many long years been fighting and warring with Asia, and, like a sworn foe, carrying on depredations into the uttermost parts of the East. Most sanguinary and deadly has this war been, and verily it has no parallel in the annals of the world. It has perpetrated frightful havoc among the nations of the East, sweeping off like a deluge their ancient glory and greatness. Even now the war rages with unabated fury. Europe, why do thy eyes still roll in wild fury and insatiate antagonism as if bent upon Asia's total annihilation?.....Alas! Before the formidable artillery of Europe's aggressive civilization the scriptures and prophets, the language and literature of the East, nay her customs and manners, her social and domestic institutions, and her very industries have undergone a cruel slaughter. The rivers that flow eastward and the rivers that flow westward are crimson with Asiatic gore: yes, with the best blood of oriental life. Enough. Stay, Europe, desist from this sanguinary strife. No more war."

The vivid picture of Asia's plight under the aggressive civilization of the West that Keshub thus drew has lost none of its colouring during the years that have passed since ; on the other hand the colours have grown more vivid, and it may seem that the passage is more of a prophecy that is being fulfilled to-day than a description of his own period when he was speaking. Perhaps the only difference is that what was then on the part of Europe, a sort of general aggressiveness in which religious superiority and fanaticism played

not an insignificant part, has now become thoroughly secular and is largely due to militarism, imperialism and economic exploitation, and as such it is far more brutal and ruthless. Hence it is but right that it should form the subject of the most anxious thought for all who have the true union of the East and the West at heart, and who are thus pre-eminently peace-makers of the type spoken of in the Beatitudes. No names are to be more honoured than those who strive for this union under the most discouraging circumstances, but their number is not large to-day. Moreover this is *the* problem of political as well as missionary statesmanship, and in its solution lies that of many other problems. Keshub Chunder Sen was the first and foremost among those who have put before themselves this goal of a union of the East and the West, and hence his words have an abiding interest for all who believe that there is but one God, who has created, and rules over, both the East and the West, and Whose will it is that they should be one.

With regard to the sacred character of Asia he says the following:—

“Is not Asia the birthplace of great prophets and saints? Is it not pre-eminently a holy place of pilgrimage to the rest of the world? Yes, upon Asia's soil have flourished and prospered those at whose feet the world lies prostrate. The great religions which have given life and salvation to millions of men owe their origin to Asia. To me the dust of Asia is far more precious than gold and silver. Surely, it is hallowed ground that we tread in Asia. The East is emphatically the Holy Land. Asia is not only holy ground.

but it is catholic ground also. In this one place you could count all the leading prophets and all the "greatest religious geniuses of the world. No great prophet was born outside the boundaries of Asia. Is not this a noteworthy fact? Asia is the home of all the recognised Churches in the world. It is not the exclusive seat of any single system of faith. It is not the exclusive property of any particular sect. Jews, Christians and Mohammedans, Hindus, Buddhists and Parsis, all recognise in Asia their common home. The spirit of Asia is cosmopolitan, catholic and comprehensive, not partial, one-sided or sectarian. Not even her worst enemies can predicate narrow exclusivism of Asia. She has cradled and nursed and suckled all the great Churches of the East and the West. How versatile her genius, how diverse her gifts, how wide her sympathies, how comprehensive her character! How large the breast that gave milk to so many and such widely divergent creeds and Churches! Mother of Christianity and Hinduism, the world magnifies thee and honours thy matchless catholicity. Thou hast nursed Jesus and Buddha and Zoroaster. Verily in the spirit of Asia are all sects reconciled.....How from one heart grew such great and glorious geniuses as Jesus and Buddha, Zoroaster and Confucius, must strike every thoughtful man with astonishment. How in the same land flourished pantheism, polytheism and monotheism: communion, asceticism, ritualism, quietism and the most transcendental spiritualism: how in the same soil grew such divergent creeds as Hinduism and



Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, Mohammedanism, Confucianism and Sikhism, must remain an abiding marvel in all ages. All, all the great religions are mine, saith Asia, and their founders are all my children. Lo! on my lap are seated the prophet of Nazareth and the prophet of Nuddea. The mountain on which Moses saw Jehovah in the burning bush and received the Decalogue is mine, saith Asia. Mine too is the mountain on which Christ Jesus preached his famous sermon. Mine also are the Himalayas on which Aryan devotees lost themselves in contemplation. Mine likewise is the memorable Bo tree under whose shade the great Buddha attained final beatitude. Sinai is mine, saith Asia, and the Jordan is mine, and the sacred Ganges is mine. The Vedas and the Bible are mine, the cross and the crescent are mine. Verily, verily there is infinite diversity in Asia's creeds and her Catholicity is immeasurably vast. How then can I, as an Asiatic, standing upon Asiatic ground, and with Asiatic blood coursing through my veins, prove disloyal to such wide catholicity, the birthright and glory of my race? Surely, I would be a traitor to my nationality if I did not assume a thoroughly catholic attitude. Can I be a sectarian? As a Bengalee I might; as an Indian I might; but as an Asiatic I cannot, I dare not be a sectarian".

It is as a representative and messenger of this sacred and catholic Continent that Keshub says:—

"Europe, I charge thee to be unsectarian. Asia's first message to Western nations is,—Put the sword of sectarianism adroitly into the sheath."

He says Europe is bound to do this inasmuch as sectarianism is carnality, and St. Paul has forbidden all Christians to cherish 'envying and strife and divisions,' which are due to carnality. Again it is to be avoided because it violates charity, the charity that St. Paul put above all other virtues. In addition to this all sectarianism is to be avoided because it is unscientific. Thus whether from the point of view of Christianity which was its religion, or from the point of view of Science which it was its special mission to cultivate and develop, Europe, says he, ought to cease to be sectarian. He says, there must be one Church, as there is but one Science which reduces all things to unity.

The unity which he pleads for here is not uniformity which is the death of nature and of soul; it is the unity of music, in which "there is concordance in the midst of apparent discordance". It is the unity of the body and limbs; of the family, or of the political fellowship in a well-organized state.

He then goes on to describe the character of this New Dispensation Church which, he says, will be the rallying-point of all advanced Christians of all sects, and of the people of other faiths of the world. This is how he describes it:—

"Tell me not that the New Dispensation is the creation of a new anti-Christian sect. Woe unto me if ever I harboured in mind the remotest desire to found a new sect, and thus add to the already accumulated evils of sectarianism! Woe unto me if I ever conceived the project of setting up a movement against the Church of Christ! Perish these lips if they utter a word of

rebellion against Jesus. And let the genial currents of my life-blood be curdled at this very moment if I glory in the hateful ambition of rising against my master. A new sect! God forbid. We preach not a new sect, but the death of sectarianism and the universal reconciliation of all churches. But the very idea of an Eclectic Church, it will be contended, is anti-Christian. To mix up Christ with the hundred and one creeds of the world is to destroy and deny Christ. To mix Christ with what? With error, with impurity? No. Mix Christ with all that is Christian in other creeds. Surely that is not un-Christian, far less anti-Christian. In uniting the East and the West, in uniting Asiatic and European faith and character, the Church of the New Dispensation works faithfully upon the lines laid down by Christ, and only seeks to amalgamate the Western Christ and the Eastern Christ. It is not a treaty of Christ with anti-Christ that is proposed, but the reconciliation of all in Christ. It is not the mixture of purity with impurity, of truth with falsehood, of light with darkness, but the fusion of all types of purity, truth and light in all systems of faith into one integral whole. It is the expurgation of anti-Christian elements from the so-called Christian and heathen creeds of the world, and the amalgamation of the pure Christian residuum left. Such is the pure Christian eclecticism of the Church of the New Dispensation. In this Church Universal there is no idolatry, no caste, no moral impurity, no domestic unchastity, no social corruption, no doctrinal error. Whatsoever is Christian and pure and holy my Church

rejoicingly glorifies. The non-Christian Asiatic has his meekness : but, I ask, is not that meekness Christian? If the Mohammedan speaks truth, is not his truthfulness Christian? If the Buddhist is charitable and is always going about upon errands of mercy, is not his charity Christian? Can there be any form of goodness or godliness which is not Christian? I do firmly believe that whatsoever is true and good and beautiful is of Christ. Truth is one, and recognises neither caste nor colour. In the nature of things there is not, there can never be, a distinction between Christian truth and non-Christian truth, between Christian veracity and non-Christian veracity. It is absurd, preposterously absurd, to talk of two meeknesses, two humilities, two philanthropies, two purities, two chastities or two asceticisms, one Christian and other heathen. No, there is but one truth possible, one love, one purity, which is of God, and therefore of Christ. It follows then as an irresistible and necessary inference that in entering upon a Broad Church alliance\* with the diversified forms of goodness and purity in other sects you do not leave Christ behind, but bring to him all that is his Father's in other churches. Believe me, Asia's appeal to Europe is a Christian appeal. Asia calls upon Western nations to abjure sectarianism and join the Catholic Church in the name of Christ, the Son of God. Nay, I would go further, and declare Christ to be the centre of this Broad Church. I have said that the vanguard of each sect will advance towards a common centre, and form the Catholic Church

of the future. Who can better represent this than Christ Jesus ? ”

Keshub had declared in his previous lectures, particularly the last one, that Christ was the source and author of all that was good and true and beautiful in pre-Christian and non-Christian religious faiths, and this he repeats here. But he goes further and says that Christ is the source as well as the sole criterion by which to judge what is good and therefore Christian in non-Christian religions, and it is this that constitutes a new step in advance of his old position. He is, besides, careful to qualify his Eclecticism by the word “Christian” calling it ‘the pure Christian eclecticism of the Church of the New Dispensation.’ The eclecticism on which he had taken his stand for so many years is now neither the resultant of so many forces pulling in opposite directions as he had said last year, nor is it a harmony of various religions which are all equally true as he had also said at one time; but it is purely Christian inasmuch as the standard by which he wants to judge all the religions before selecting therefrom the Christian elements is no other than Christ Jesus. But Jesus is not merely the source and standard of all that is good and pure and true in the world; he is more than that; he is proclaimed by Keshub to be the very centre of this Church of the New Dispensation, and that on Christ’s own authority :—

“There are cogent reasons,” he declares, “why we should give to Christ this central position. In fact he claims it and demands it as the Son of God, and challenges universal recognition of his rightful position, to which he is divinely called.

Analyze Christ's fundamental theology, and you will find in it two parts essentially distinct from each other. The first is "I in my Father;" the second "Ye in me." All Europe believes in the first but the second has yet to be realized. Who is there in orthodox Christendom that does not say, Ay, when Christ says, I and my Father are one? Surely in the identity of his nature with that of the Supreme God all Christian nations in the West have established their firm faith. But they have accepted only one half of Christ. Why should they abjure the other half? If Christ is one with Divinity, he is one also with humanity. If you believe in the full Christ, in the perfect Christ, you must believe in the double harmony of his nature, harmony with God or communion, and harmony with man or community. Alas! Christian Europe does not yet comprehend the real secret of the words, Ye in me! Christ's identity with all mankind is indeed a grand mystery, which Christian Europe seems yet unable to understand. I do believe as you do that the Son and the Father are one, but this unity is only the first half of Christ. Why do you cast off the other half of Christ, his unity with humanity? Unravel the deep meaning of the words, "Ye in me, I in you." In the disciples is Christ, and all the disciples are in the bosom of Christ. Yes, the entire church of Christ, vast and varied, is in Christ, and Christ is in all its parts and in each of its numberless sects. Nay, not the Church only, but all mankind is in him, and he in all mankind. How comprehensive and beautiful this world-wide unity in Christ! .....Jew and Gentile, Christian and barbarian, all

he identified as his own, and their sins and sufferings he took unto himself...It was not a mere intellectual recognition of identity, but an actual spiritual identification, an interweaving of heart with heart and soul with soul. Christ actually saw himself, an undivided Christ with his seamless raiment, dwelling and breathing in every human heart. And so he offered himself before God as an atonement for all mankind."

It would seem from the words quoted here that Keshub had made his peace with the idea of the identity and unity of the Son with the Father as it is understood by orthodox Christianity, the idea against which he had hurled his anathema only the previous year. He no more finds fault with the Christian Church on that account, but for stopping short at that, and for forgetting what he calls the other half, *i. e.*, Christ's identity and unity with humanity. He stands up now for the twofold mediation of Christ, and the newness or the singularity of the New Dispensation is no more in the absence of a centre or mediator as he had said in his lecture "We Apostles of the New Dispensation," but now it consists in this that it sees in the work of Christ not only a reconciliation of Man with God, but of Man with Man. The New Dispensation would be indeed new, a real growth and development of the Christian Dispensation, having a just claim to be called the third dispensation, if it could be shown to have been the first to discover and emphasize this other half of the entire mediation or at-one-ment of Jesus Christ, *viz.*, that which Keshub declared to have been hidden in the words 'Ye in me.' But the very idea of the Church as the Body of Jesus Christ who

is the Head, or as the Bride whose Bridegroom He is, implies the oneness of Christ with man. All the same Keshub was rendering a great service to the Christian Church in calling it to realize this fact of the human mediation of Christ, which was involved in his divine mediation, and his emphasis on the community-side of Christ's life and death had a special value of its own in those days, when individualism was invading all ranks of life and had taken hold of even the Christian Church in the West. That Christ's At-one-ment was twofold, and that all those who had been reconciled to God in Christ were bound to unite, not outwardly but inwardly, into forming but one Christ, was a teaching which, though not new, was significant and important in those days. Taking up this doctrine of twofold at-one-ment, the only important Christian doctrine about which he had said nothing very definite during all these years, Keshub speaks in continuation of the passage quoted above as follows :—

“ And so he offered himself before God as an atonement for all mankind. Atonement did I say? What a startling announcement you would think I have made before this great assembly? Yes, I would have you believe in Christ's atonement. All India must believe that Christ is the Son of God. Nay, more than this. I will make myself bold enough to prophesy, all India will one day acknowledge Jesus Christ as the atonement, the Universal Atonement for all mankind. Believe me, I tell you the truth, and nothing but the truth. I tell you my deepest conviction, reverently and devoutly. Seated at the feet of Jesus, I wonder at the philosophical depth of his doctrine; I wonder at the immeasurable breadth of his heart. Jesus,



thou art atonement incarnate. Thou art love and reconciliation. Thou art unity divine and unity human. Thou art the bond of separated souls, the reconciliation of discordant homes, the bridge of divided continents, the federation of hostile nations and sects, the peace of distracted hearts, the restoration of fallen humanity. As the Son of God, I love thee O Jesus, but as the world's universal atonement, I love thee more. How true, how sublime the doctrine, of Christ's atonement! We find in it a world of philosophy and a world of poetry. For what is atonement in its literal sense? Nothing can be clearer than the etymology of the word. Atonement simply means At-one-ment—to be one; to be reconciled. Atonement is nothing but reconciliation..... Man waged war with God, through atonement they are reconciled. Man waged war with man: they are reconciled through atonement. The atoning medium in each case is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the reconciliation of man with man and of all men with God, the harmony of humanity with humanity and of all humanity with Divinity.....He substituted himself for the world, and at once, heaven and earth, hitherto two became one. The substitution is a grand fact.....Believe in this substitution, and we are all one in Christ. In Christ's bosom we are all united. Talk of Christians only? Nay, the whole heathen world as well.....In his atoning blood the most polluted of all ages and climes find a place..... His atoning blood overflowed the little embankments of his Jewish humanity, and burst like a universal deluge upon all humanity, swallowing

the remotest parts of the globe, east, west, north and south, in its shoreless immensity. Thus the world is lost in Christ; in his all-embracing atonement the rich and the poor, saints and sinners of all ages and countries, of all sects and tribes are swallowed.....they do him grave injustice who believe that his atonement embraced only the small body of his disciples, or that it applies only to one sect in the world, namely those who call themselves Christians.....Once for all in history the blessed atonement was consummated by Christ. The consummation was complete and absolute. Christ has offered himself, as an atonement for all flesh and for all eternity. It is done, it is done. He has given his precious blood for all of us, whether we believe it or not.....We have only to apply it to ourselves. He has done his work, let us do ours. Let us all believe that he has died for you and me, and the atonement on our side is completed.....Jesus has taken us all into his atoning heart; what remains is that we should find our unity in his reconciling bosom. Do this and you are reconciled. You may be unconscious of the fact that he took all fallen humanity, the greatest sinners and infidels included, into the presence of his beloved Father and prayed to Him, Bless these for my sake; and the Lord blessed them one and all, and said, I will bless them for ever and ever for Christ's sake. So we have all received the Lord's benediction through our common mediator and brother Christ, and if we only realize this in our consciousness, we are reconciled to heaven through him. That we are Hindus, that we are Indians does not

debar us from Christ's atonement. The slightest introspection will convince us that Christ is in us too, and that we are in Christ. Behold I am reconciled to all through the blood of him crucified. Fellow-countrymen, be ye also reconciled through him. Rest assured, ye shall have to accept that reconciliation sooner or later. You may resist it for a time, you may object to it in theory, you may even reject it as false doctrine, but the advancing surges of Christ's atoning blood no man, no nation shall escape, and sect after sect, and race after race shall all be engulfed. There shall be no duality, but an indivisible unity shall prevail throughout the length and breadth of the world. All sects shall be as one family, and all men shall brothers be for dear Christ's sake. Already I begin to see through the vista of his blessed sonship educated India marching hand in hand with other nations and sects through new and fragrant fields to the land of universal love."

Immediately after this long exposition of the fact of Christ's atonement, an exposition, which is not quite free from rationalistic elements, there follows this grand and beautiful passage:—

"Behold the central figure of the divine Son. The radii of all human races and nationalities from the remotest parts in the circumference of humanity converge and meet in him. He attracts all into himself and reconciles all in a common fellowship with himself and his God. Lo! From the uttermost parts of the earth and from the most divergent sects the broader and more advanced souls of each church march under their respective scriptures, till they reach the centre and rally

under the banner of the universal atonement which Jesus holds triumphantly in his hand. Look at that grand march of all the religious denominations of the earth, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans. Each has its own distinctive badge and colours, each is led by its own trusted chief, each keeps its own national music, each is marshalled in its own martial order, each is true to its own historic traditions. Each retains its peculiar virtues, but is freed from all its peculiar errors and impurities. And thus the sanctified and reformed churches move out of their respective sects, and press onward in their variegated colours to the central church of reconciliation. Here they are united in that kingdom of heaven which knows no sect and inculcates no sectarian dogma, whose cardinal doctrines are the love of God and the love of men, and which unifies all mankind in one man, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And Jesus welcomes all the chiefs of all sects, for they dwelt in him, the eternal Logos, and with him they again fraternize. Verily in Socrates was Christ, as the early Fathers held and in Confucius too was Christ, and in Buddha, and in Nanak and in Chaitanya, and in Paul, and in Luther was he. In him they are all reconciled, and their broken lights unite to form the perfect Logos, the Word of God. It is a joy indeed thus to lose ourselves in Christ in a state of universal reconciliation, and be one with God and one with man."

In this way Keshub describes the Church of the Future, calling it by various names, the Church

which has for its centre Jesus Christ and the circumference of which cuts through all the sects and nations and races. As he had said in his first lecture "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia" that Jesus Christ was not the monopoly of Europe alone, so he now says that he is not the monopoly of Christians alone, but is equally related to Hindus and Mohammedans and people of all faiths. For him and for many with him, no more will the old boundaries set by various sects and religions stand, and he is determined to sweep them away with the flood of that universal love which Christ exemplified and preached to the world, and which was the very essence of his life, teachings and death. It was the mission of Europe, and above all that of those who call themselves Christians to do this, and it is to them that Keshub appeals in the following words:—

"Europe, thou lovest Christ, I know. Thou hast accepted the fact of his atonement, I admit. But only one aspect of that truth thou hast accepted; the other side, and equally important half, thou still ignorest. Thou seekest indeed the reconciliation of fallen humanity with Divinity through Jesus. But dost thou seek atonement with humanity? Thou hast sinned against thy brother through pride, through selfishness and through sectarianism; dost thou seek atonement in Christ? Asia says no. Asia urges upon thee, O Europe, a double and perfect atonement, and charges thee to be at one with all nations and with all denominations through Jesus Christ. He is surely the "way", the way to God, and the way to man, the way to peace in Heaven, the way to peace on the earth; the way to reconciliation with a just God,

the way to reconciliation with separated and estranged brethren. Let Christ be unto you, ye Western nations, a full and perfect atonement for all your sins, against God and man, and let his blood wash away sectarianism and unbrotherliness and prove the bond of a kinship among all mankind. Christ stands in the Holy Land, between Asia and Europe; Asia says to Europe, Sister, let us be one in Christ."

It was an irony of fate that such a message should have to be addressed by an Asiatic and a non-Christian to Europe and to Christian nations, and not *vice versa*. Keshub here tries to free Christianity from what he called Churchianity but what may more appropriately be called Europeanism, a thing which was and is even now much more inimical to the progress of true Christianity, and then he invites Europe to co-operate with Asia in the task of building up a true Christo-centric Euro-Asiatic unity. In a way it is the same kind of work that was done by St. Paul in the early history of Christianity when he separated it from Judaism, and made it truly universal.

After showing at length the point of contact between the daily ablutions and acts of eating and drinking of the Hindus and the two chief sacraments of the Christian Religion, Keshub goes on once more to invite and appeal to Europe to find its atonement with Asia in Christ alone. To Europe he says:—

"Christian Europe, Asia will have no other atonement with thee except in Christ. Any secular reconciliation or political treaty she would altogether repudiate. We Asiatics invite the nations of the West to a spiritual alliance and an international federation upon no other ground than that

of Christ's atonement. In his name let us forgive and forget the hostilities of centuries, and in his name shake hands with each other with true brotherly love. Let Christian Europe give to heathen Asia all that she has of Christ, and Christian Asia shall give to heathen Europe what has been vouchsafed to her by Christ."

These are some of the wisest and greatest words uttered in modern times, and when read in the light of events that are transpiring around us on all sides to-day at the distance of half a century, they show Keshub to be one who can take his place among the greatest of the world's prophets and evangelists.

The contribution of Asia towards the spiritual culture of the world, according to Keshub is just 'that deep idealism and lofty spirituality of the East' which makes God-vision so easy to the Asiatic soul, and in which alone, he says, the world would find a sufficient safeguard against the agnosticism of the West. This is what he says with regard to it :—

"It is un-Asiatic not to know God. If I know my Father I have no glory; if I do not, all Asia cuts me off as a traitor and an outcast. Vivid God-vision is not a luxury which the Hindu enjoys but once a year. Nay, it is the daily devotion of every humble believer.....Europe, the Lord has blessed thee with scholarship and science and philosophy, and with these thou art great among the nations of the earth. Add to these the faith and intuition and spirituality of Asia and thou shalt be far greater still. Asia honours thy philosophy; do thou honour, Europe, Asia's spirituality and communion. Thus shall

we rectify each other's errors and supplement mutual deficiencies. Europe will correct and purify Eastern communion with the hard logic of science and remove all the superstitions and idolatrous rites and all the mystical delusions which have encrusted around it in the course of ages. While on the other hand we shall take the dry facts of Western science, fill them with the flesh and blood of Eastern sentiment, and spiritualize and vivify them with a living faith."

Continuing his appeal to Europe to see God in all Nature and History, Keshub ended his lecture with these words which are rich with divine hope and vision :—

" Whether it is politics or trade, pleasure or business, that brings the European and Asiatic races together, I see only the gradual formation of a diversified congregation in the new Church of Atonement which the Lord has upreared in our midst. Everything seems to hasten the day of reconciliation. After war comes peace; after centuries of separation comes sweet reconciliation. Strike up then, ye nations of the West, your solemn national music with your sacred instruments, and let the nations of the East, with their peculiar instruments, discourse sweet Eastern music, and may Heaven so regulate and adjust the various sounds that they may swell into a harmonious chorus unto the glory of Heaven's King. And as the new song of Atonement is sung with enthusiasm by millions of voices, representing all the various languages of the world, millions of souls, each dressed in its national garb of piety and righteousness, glowing in an infinite



and complete variety of colours, shall dance round  
and round the Father's throne and peace and joy  
shall reign for ever. "

With these words was closed the last of that series of remarkable lectures which were heard with such great pleasure and inspiration, by the devout and the cultured among both Indians and Europeans of Calcutta, which, largely owing to Keshub's own influence, was at that time the nerve-centre of the intellectual and the spiritual life of New India. This was practically the final utterance of that voice which through the power of the spirit it expressed reverberated so eloquently through the whole land, and even beyond, so much so that it was truly said by an appreciative observer from the West, "When Keshub speaks the world listens." His oratorical gifts have been thus described by Rev. Joseph Cook of Boston:—

"He is an orator born, not made. He has a splendid physique, excellent quality of organization, capacity of sudden heat and of tremendous impetuosity, and lightning-like swiftness of thought and expression, combined with a most iron self-control."

The present writer was told by an eminent missionary who had heard the best orators of England, men like Gladstone, Bright, etc., that as an orator Keshub was superior even to them, and that he had not heard anyone speak like him.

## II

As for the lecture, Keshub may well have known it was his last word to mankind, for as his biographer, P. C. Moozomdar says 'it was delivered under great

physical strain, for he was not at all well at the time, and the disease detected last year had gained a very firm hold upon his constitution,' and this fact of its being possibly his last word may have led him to select for it the most ambitious title which he had yet chosen. The lecture which was delivered under such circumstances was a fitting climax to those grand utterances which inspired and will continue to inspire thousands of aspirants after higher religion in India and outside it. In these lectures Keshub had been in his own luminous manner setting forth from year to year the Confession of his Faith as the representative religious leader of modern India. In the final one are strangely and surprizingly resolved the inconsistencies and contradictions of Keshub's belief and even of his character in a singular and beautiful harmony.

In this lecture Keshub tries to solve the problem of finding a centre of gravity for his eclectic system so that it might not fall to pieces at the caprice of the individual. Keshub had after all come to realise that mere eclecticism was untenable and could never be the religion of India, much less that of the world. It would be a house without foundation, ready to give way at the very first adverse motion within the mind or from the world without. Consequently in this lecture he bases it on the God-given foundation which is no other than the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. The simple eclecticism of old becomes now what he calls "Christian Eclecticism." No more does he say that all religions are equally true, and therefore should be harmonized or unified as they are, but that it is only the Christian elements which may be found in non-Christian faiths that are to be harmonized with pure

**Christianity.** Everything has to pass through the test of Christian or rather Christ-consciousness, and only that which can do so will be allowed to remain. It is in this way that Keshub ultimately comes to establish his religious system on pure Christian consciousness or Christ-life.

This discovery of Jesus Christ as the centre was not altogether a new thing for Keshub, although it may have been now for the first time that he becomes fully conscious of and gives expression to it. In reality it was only the discovery of what had long lain dormant in his mind, a revelation of his inner self to the world. Ever since he had come in early youth into spiritual contact with the luminous and all-attractive personality of Christ, that divine Being had been the very centre of Keshub's spiritual life. In all his thought and speech, in his prayers, sermons and lectures, in his *Bhakti* and *Yoga*, *Jnana* and *Karma*, in his attempted Harmony of Religions and Scriptures, in fact in everything concerning spiritual and even social life, Jesus Christ was the governing centre. Keshub had tested each new doctrine or discipline, religious and social experiment or activity, and every relation of the family or of the Church, and co-ordinated and correlated all of them together by the teachings, life and spirit of Christ.

The question may well be asked whether the standpoint of Keshub as he has made it clear in this lecture of his is "Christian" in the orthodox sense. Keshub himself calls his message "Christian" both at the outset and at the end, and repeatedly calls, his system "Christian eclecticism" or "synthesis" and uses the word "Christian" nearly a dozen times in connection with the system he proclaims. From all this

and from the sum and substance of the message itself, one can say without any misrepresentation that Keshub had really arrived at a point which is in a way within the compass of Christianity, not of the dogmatic or doctrinal kind, but of that kind which may be called practical, understanding that word in a higher sense than mere philanthropy. Undoubtedly Keshub's 'Christian' system was yet far from that full-orbed faith that shines forth from the Gospels and the Epistles, in the lives and teachings of the Apostles and Fathers, martyrs and saints. But if doctrinally it is not this Christianity which may be called *Sanatan* in comparison with the ever-changing and ever-varying forms of it that are to be found among those peoples and sects which do not accept the faith that is called catholic, it is their highest common factor by which Keshub stands and which he claims as his own. The Christianity that Keshub preaches is an extreme form of broad and liberal Christianity that will be the religion of what he calls the 'Broad Church of Christ,' in which the more liberal of the Catholic and Protestant branches of Christ's Church will advance and meet upon a common platform and form a broad Christian community in which they all shall be unified and 'in which the Baptist and the Methodist, the Trinitarian and the Unitarian, the ritualistic and the evangelical, shall all unite in a broad and universal Church organization.' Keshub is still true in a way to his favourite doctrine of harmony, but he now transfers it from the realm of various religions of the world to the various sects of Christianity; and the practical side of it has taken such a hold over him, that the mystical side of Christianity, which alone is vital

and which through the practical experience of regeneration constitutes the essence of Christianity, is lost sight of. In point of breadth Keshub stands by the side of such great Christian leaders as Fredrick Denison Maurice, and his own friend Dean Stanley in pleading for an interdenominational and international Christianity. If ever the thoughtful and deep words of friendly counsel that the Dean uttered to Keshub received a complete response from him, it was in this lecture, and of all the words of the noble Dean, perhaps none bore such rich fruit as the following which form a part of the very thoughtful address given by him at the very first meeting held in England to welcome Keshub, in commending to his close attention the Christianity that was common to all gathered on that occasion :—

“ We, the members and ministers of widely divergent churches are most anxious to impress upon Keshub Chunder Sen that amidst and athwart all the divisions which he may find among us there is still a common Christianity to which he would look with reverence. We feel that every Christian Church, then, is great and noble in proportion as it is able to recognise what is great and noble in other Churches. We feel that we approach most nearly to the spirit of the Founder of the Faith in proportion as we are enabled to recognise His traces in every form and shape and human excellence wherever it may be seen..... One of the strongest claims put forward in the New Testament as a ground for the reverence due to the Founder of Christianity, was that “ He was the light that lighteneth every man that cometh into the world.” One of the highest aspirations breathed concerning this by the ancient Prophets (almost in

the very words with which our eminent guest has made us familiar) was that He was to be the inheritance alike of Europe and Asia. It was always said to be one of the most striking proofs of the heavenly origin of our religion, that, having sprung from the East it was able to conquer and assimilate the West; and that proof would be redoubled if, having become European and Western, it is enabled to win back unto itself the higher intelligences of the remoter East. This can only be by fixing our minds on that common element in the various Churches of Christendom which presents our faith at once in its most sublime and most attractive aspect. The day, thank God, has gone by in which the idea of a common Christianity, independent of the differences which separate the various churches from each other, was regarded as chimerical. It stands acknowledged in the most striking form in the practical field of national education. It has always been known to exist, both among the simplest and also among the most cultivated intelligences of Christendom.....It has also been long known to exist in the gifted spirits who soar above the narrow distinctions of sect and party, and who have been able to see the meaning of truths behind the forms in which they have often been shrouded. The Christianity of Bacon, of Shakespeare, and of Walter Scott needs no special decrees and no special confession of faith to recommend it. It is this which goes to the minds and hearts of all and it is this which I venture to recommend as the Christianity of England to our distinguished guest. And if I may speak for a moment of myself, I will add, that if there

be any one ecclesiastic, who by virtue of his office is bound to take this view of Christianity it is myself, because the great national sanctuary is committed to my care, which enshrines the virtues and the genius of every sect alike—that temple of Silence and Réconciliation, as it has well been called, in which the enmities of twenty centuries lie buried and forgiven.”

Another passage from the same speech might well be quoted here to show how broad-minded the Dean was, and how the lesson that that wise man of the West wanted to convey to Keshub, was not without its fruit. Says he as follows :—

“In turning to the second part, viz, the hopes for India and for England, excited by the presence of Keshub Chunder Sen, it is in strict conformity with those common principles of our faith, to which I have adverted, that we hail the rise of a new light in those regions in which it has hitherto been so difficult to find points of contact or communication. When the first preachers of Christianity set forth on their mission, they cast right and left in every direction to find such points between themselves and the unknown world on which they were entering. St. Paul, at Lystra, addressed himself to the natural conscience of the Lycaonian tribes, and at Athens to the Altar of the Unknown God and to the verses of the heathen poets. St. John sought from the philosophical schools of Alexandria the metaphysical phrase in which he embodied the sublimest thoughts of Christianity. So, even in later times the great Roman Pontiff who sent the first missionaries to convert our

Anglo-Saxon forefathers, entreated them not to proceed by precipitate leaps, but by gradual steps: and another Pontiff, still more eminent, when he sent his missionaries to found the church of northern Germany, implored them in the words of their Master, not to pour new wine too hastily into old bottles. What we hope and desire for India is not that it should take without change or modification any purely European form of Christianity, whether Anglican, Presbyterian, Greek or Roman, but that in the same way as Roman Christianity planted itself in the Latin race and Teutonic Christianity in the race of England, Germany and America, so there would arise some native form of Indian Christianity. The first dawn of that native form is seen through religious reformers of whom the guest of the evening is the leading representative..... We see, amidst whatever differences between ourselves and our guest, in his aspirations after moral excellence and Divine love, a pledge that he will receive more and more, for himself and for his country, what we hold to be the best and purest light, and also that he will enable us, by witnessing the approach to that light from a point of view not our own, to comprehend more clearly those aspects of it which the fulness of time, from age to age, is ever more unfolding."

It was this message of England to India consisting in the substance of 'the common Christianity', 'that common element in the various Churches of Christendom', then given to Keshub as the representative religious reformer of India, through Dean Stanley, the best representative of that common Christianity in England,



that was re-embodied in the rich oriental experience and expression of Keshub, and returned back in an amplified form to Europe as no less than 'Asia's Message to Europe.' Had the large-hearted and broad-minded Dean been living, how much would he have rejoiced to see the seed that he had sown, growing thus and bearing such fruit! In spite of all the differences of form and garb, the one Occidental and the other Oriental, the two messages have much in common, not merely in spirit but even in form. Keshub may not have been conscious of this close identity between the two messages, one from Europe to Asia and the other from Asia to Europe, but this shows the power of the subconscious element in man, and still more the power of that truth which is the same at all times and in all places.

The advance that Keshub has made in this last lecture upon his previous one, *i.e.*, 'That Marvellous Mystery, the Trinity,' is no small one, and appears at once when we compare his attitude towards Trinitarian Christianity in the two lectures. While in the previous lecture, particularly at the end thereof, it was antagonistically Arian or Semi-Arian, here it is not only conciliatory but even in a sense positively Christian. There in the name of the New Dispensation he had warned the Christian missionaries, not to make of Christ another *avatar* as he declared they were doing and had said he would do his best to withstand that. Here he is seeking union with the Christians of all denominations. Not only do we not find in this lecture a word of dissent from the fundamental doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, but Keshub even seems reconciled to it. He says:—

“Who is there in orthodox Christendom that does not say, Ay, when Christ says, I and my

Father are one? Surely in the identity of his nature with that of the Supreme God all Christian nations in the West have established their firm faith."

No more does Keshub differ from them in this matter. If he now differs from orthodox Christianity in anything, it is in going further than they in the application of the idea of Christ's identity with man. He has made his peace with orthodox Christianity in the matter regarding which only the previous year he had been in serious antagonism to it, and wants now to go even a step further. The metaphysical question concerning the identity of Christ with God he has shelved for the time if he has not solved it, and the moral question concerning the oneness of Humanity in Christ seems to loom larger on his mental horizon, and it is in this that he would see the world united.

The main ideas of this lecture, ideas which sum up all the religious teaching of Keshub, are Christian Communion and Christian Communism; taking the word Christian to mean Christ-like. Both these ideas he includes in one word, atonement with God, and with Man. To put it more simply, these ideas are:— the Fatherhood of God, the Sonship of Christ, the Presence of Christ in all the Religions, Scriptures and Prophets of the world, and the oneness of Humanity in Christ. These were the ideas for which Keshub had stood from the beginning of his public career, and which he was striving all his life to realise and attain to in the life of his Church and his Country. But he had never been able to give so clear an expression to them as in this lecture. It is singularly free

from all the inconsistencies, contradictions and eccentricities which appear in his other public utterances. All these are beautifully resolved into a harmony and concord, which, if not perfect, is the fullest and highest to which Keshub ever attained. The simplicity and spontaneity of language in which this inner harmony is expressed is unsurpassed in any other of his lectures. As his final and most important utterance this lecture may well be called Keshub's Last Will and Testament.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

## FINAL ACTIVITIES AND THE END.

The year 1883 was the last year of Keshub's life. Diabetes had taken a deadly hold on him, and it was only a question of time when his earthly sojourn should be over. The climate of Calcutta was far from suitable for him during the warm months, and Keshub left for the Hills in the early part of the year. While there, he retired within himself more than he had ever done before, and in the communion with God which he called *Yoga* he found much-needed solace, both for his body and mind. The beauties of Nature on the heights of the Himalayas, together with the sacred associations still clinging to them on account of the seers of ancient India, made Keshub enter more and more deeply into this *Yoga*, the peaceful and joyful practice of the presence of God, a practice which had been a special spiritual culture or *sadhan* with him for the last few years. While there he wrote his last two books, "The Nava Samhita," and "The Yoga, Subjective and Objective." Both of these were written after the manner of the ancient Rishis of India, the first having in addition the authoritative manner of the Jewish prophets, while the second is a small collection of short essays and is more like a philosophical treatise.

*The Nava Samhita*, the more elaborate of these two, is the child of his maturest years, and contains his deepest thoughts on all the important questions relating to personal, domestic or social life. It is meant to be, as its name implies, a comprehensive Law of Life, embracing every department of personal, social and domestic duty as well as ceremonies and vows for special conditions of life. The book thus

divides itself into three parts, each of them being of the same size. In the first of these he draws the outline of the ideal man and householder of the New Dispensation, enjoining all his duties with a "Thou shalt" or "He shall." It covers the whole domain of life including business, amusement and studies. The character which it contemplates is well within the power of every one to realize, yet such a life has a sacramental import. In accordance with what he had said in his last lecture, he emphasizes the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, interpreted in his own peculiar manner. With regard to bathing and eating, among other things, he says :—

"Thy bath-room is for baptism and thy dining-room for the eucharist: both shall be sacred unto thee, and neither shalt thou suffer to be unclean or ungodly. Remember always the scriptural text (Sanskrit) :—Whether-ye eat or drink or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God. The morning devotion being over, the householder and the rest of the family shall enter the sacred place of their daily meals with hearts fully imbued with the spirit of the above text. When every one has taken his or her seat let all reverently bow before the Invisible *Annadayini*, the Giver of rice, and let the householder say :— Bless the food before us, and grant that it may sanctify us. Thou shalt not touch unclean bread nor unconsecrated rice, but taste that which the touch of the Divine hand has sanctified. Therefore let every believer not only say grace but also behold the presence of the Lord as a nourishing force in the food, and realize therein a type

of the higher food of the soul. Let him hearken unto the voice of the Lord saying Lo! I am in thy bread. Listen also to the voice of the saints vibrating through centuries of antiquity. Remember the Son of God in thy meals and eat his life, making his flesh thy flesh and his blood thy blood, and let him abide perpetually in thee. Then eat, and as thy mouth eats rice and bread, vegetables and sweets, the inner man shall eat and assimilate piety and purity, love and joy, and gather life eternal in God and in His saints. And thus in the house of God there shall be no carnal eating, but only sacramental breakfast and dinner every morning and evening. So shall spirit eat spirit and spirit drink spirit in the blessed mystery of the Eucharist which saints have taught and scripture hath magnified."

In the portion concerning Ceremonies, one chapter is devoted to "Diksha", i.e. Initiation. This ceremony consists of two parts, viz., 'holy ablution' or 'the ceremony of water-baptism' and then the Initiation proper. The questions that are put to the *Diksharthi* are couched in extremely beautiful language and are full of deep meaning. The outline of the faith of the New Dispensation that Keshub draws in a most delicate manner is as follows:—

Minister: Dost thou believe in the Church Universal, which is the depository of all ancient wisdom and the receptacle of modern science, which recognises in all prophets and saints a harmony, in all scriptures a unity and through all dispensations a continuity, which abjures all that separates and divides and always magnifies unity and peace, which harmonizes reason

and faith, *yoga* and *bhakti*, asceticism and social duty in their highest forms, and which shall make of all nations and sects one kingdom and one family in the fulness of time ?

Candidate : Yes.

Minister : Dost thou believe in natural inspiration, general and special ?

Candidate : Yes.

Minister : Dost thou accept and revere the scriptures ?

Candidate : Yes, so far as they are records of the wisdom and devotion and piety of inspired geniuses and of the dealings of God's special providence in the salvation of nations, of which record only the spirit is God's but the letter man's.

Minister : Dost thou accept and revere the world's prophets and saints ?

Candidate : Yes, so far as they embody and reflect the different elements of Divine character, and set forth the higher ideals of life for the instruction and sanctification of the world, I ought to revere and love and follow all that is divine in them, and try to assimilate it to my soul, making what is theirs and God's mine.

Minister : What is thy creed ?

Candidate : The Science of God, which enlighteneth all.

Minister : What is thy gospel ?

Candidate : The Love of God which saveth all.

Minister : What is thy heaven ?

Candidate : Life in God, which is accessible to all.

Minister : What is thy Church ?

Candidate: The Invisible Kingdom of God in which is all truth, all love, and all holiness.

The creed of the New Dispensation Church that is given here, a creed which to-day few among Brahmas of any sectich would not accept, shows the advance made by the Brahma Samaj since the days of Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Maharshi Devendra-nath Tagore. While the first creed as it was formulated by Raja Ram Mohun Roy in his Trust-Deed of the Brahma Sabha, itself a document of singular value, was largely negative in character, this is positive. Undoubtedly it is still like the earlier creed subjective in character, and in spite of its affirmations, leaves a very wide range of interpretation to the individual. However, its positive character affords a broader platform where people professing a variety of particular beliefs can unite with one another for devotional as well as social and other purposes, and thus form a new community of a socio-religious character. There is not the least doubt that there are large numbers of Indians to-day, larger perhaps than any body has any idea of, who practically hold this creed, and lead their lives in accordance with the liberal and catholic spirit that pervades it. The problem before the Brahma Samaj of whatever section is whether it can organize a community on the basis of this creed where all such spirits might find a home and shelter, and thereby promote the spirit of mutual tolerance and religious fellowship in spite of religious differences. It is an earnest prayer of the present writer, that this creed, wherein is reflected the spirit of Keshub's religious genius and also that of this great country, where have met various religions



and communities from times immemorial, may form the common living bond between the various sections of the Brahma Samaj itself and then between the various communities of the Country.

In this book Keshub set forth before his followers a rule for the regulation of their personal, social or church life, and the book must be read in order to get a clear idea of the ideal life as he conceived it, a life such as can be lived by the commonest man.

Although the book was not well received by some of Keshub's critics, especially in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, who thought in spite of Keshub's disclaimers that it was a further encroachment on the liberty of the individual, the outer world took a favourable view of it, and even such an orthodox Christian paper as the "Indian Churchman" noticed it while it was appearing in Keshub's paper thus :—

"It is with all sympathy that we recognise the fitness and beauty, within Indian forms of thought, of moral teachings of the New Samhita of the New Dispensation, which Keshub Chunder Sen is now publishing from week to week."

An American paper, the New York "Independent" went to the length of publishing copious extracts from it.

Since that time the book has been translated in several vernaculars, and even orthodox Hindus have appreciated it.

## II

The other work, "Yoga, Subjective and Objective" appeared first in an American paper in the form of small essays, which were later on collected together.

The book is valuable inasmuch as it contains Keshub's last thoughts on one of the deepest of questions, that of the vision of and communion with God. The book is far from complete, which was due to Keshub's increasing ill-health. He was able to treat only of the Yoga with God in Nature and in Self, calling the first objective and the other subjective *Yoga*. Perhaps even this second part he was not able to treat fully, for while forty pages are devoted to the first part, the latter is given only thirteen. What he left out altogether was what he called *Pauranic Yoga*, communion with God in History. The book, as it is, contains very little that is altogether new, or that is not found in one or another of his principal lectures, but his thoughts as they are given here are suffused with that high idealism which was 'the master-light of all his seeing', and which had now shone with the light of fresh experience gained in meditation on the Himalayan heights. However the book should be read by every student of Keshub who wants to acquire an insight into his spiritual character.

Keshub was not a writer of books. The only two books or rather booklets that he wrote were his "True Faith," and the "Nava Samhita." The first of these was written in the beginning of his career and was meant as a guide for the missionaries of the Brahma Samaj. The second was written at the end of his life for the guidance of his Church, the community which he had established and to which he had devoted himself, heart and soul. But the written records of his prayers, sermons and lectures, together with articles and notes that he wrote for his paper, both in English and in

Bengali, amount to several volumes. Of these the Bengali portion consists exclusively of prayers and sermons with the solitary exception of *Brahm-gito-panishad*, which last is a record of his oral precepts to his disciples. These Bengali works have their chief value as devotional helps, and they make a deep appeal, stirring the soul to its very depths and leading it to the heights of personal piety of a very high order. They are saturated with the spirit of Christ, as was said to the present writer by a Swedenborgian to whom he read out a few prayers translating them from Bengali into Gujarati. They are calculated to be very valuable devotional helps to all. The simple and deep sincerity of these prayers, of which there are several volumes called "Daily Prayers" and "Himalayan Prayers" offered in the course of daily worship during the last three years of his life, reveals a mind and spirit which was in deep communion with God and to whom prayer was the breath of his soul. These prayers are unique in the religious literature of the world. His Bengali sermons also form several volumes called "Acharyer Updesh", *i.e.*, "Minister's Precepts", and "Sevaker Nivedan", *i.e.*, "Appeals of the Servant." They reach indeed the high water-mark of religious eloquence in the vernacular, so much so that some of the best Bengali writers who had little sympathy with Keshub's spiritual ideals would go at times to hear the wonderful eloquence and the exquisite language of his extempore sermons. But great as is the value of these sermons and prayers, particularly the latter, in showing the depths of devotion in Keshub's mind, it is not in these that one finds the definite theological doctrines of his religious system.

For these we have to turn to his English writings, his published lectures and tracts, articles and notes that he wrote and which are published, particularly of the last two or three years of his life. These have been collected in two volumes called "The New Dispensation: the Religion of Harmony." With regard to these his chief friend and biographer Mr. P. C. Moozomdar writes: "Born master of his own vernacular, which he never took pains to study, Keshub concentrated his powers more fully on the production of a devotional and theological literature in English. His English lectures, tracts and articles contain in a most elaborate form his teachings." But whatever be the special value of each of these literatures, there is not the least doubt that one purpose and one aim sustains them all, and that there is a complete harmony and unity between the two. Any attempt made to separate them and give canonical preference to his Bengali writings alone, since his English writings are too emphatically Christo-centric and thus to play off the one against the other, would be fatal to the harmony and authority of his utterances.

Keshub's last days were approaching. His health was steadily deteriorating, and everybody including himself knew that his earthly sojourn was nearing its end. It was during these days that there was revealed a tenderness of personal relations between him and his various relatives and friends, a tenderness which was not without pathos. Among the crowd of visitors who came to inquire after his health were a number of noted people, some of whom were the Bishop of Calcutta, Ramkrishna Paramhansa and Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, with the last two of whom

Keshub was bound by special ties, and with whom his last meeting was extremely affecting. But above all it was in the little dialogue between his mother and himself that we have an insight into one of the tenderest relations of his life and one of the most secret springs of his soul. To his good and noble mother he owed many of the great qualities of his heart. During one of his last severe attacks of pain, resting his head on his mother's bosom, he said: "Mother, can nothing cure my pain?" "The pain," she cried, "is the result of my sins, the righteous son suffers for the wretched parent's unworthiness." "Say not so, do not say so, mother dear, where can there be another mother like you? Have I not inherited your virtues? Know that the Supreme Mother sends me all things for my own good. She plays with me, now on one side turns me, now on another."

The last act of Keshub's life was the building of *Nava Devalaya*, the new sanctuary, close by his house, in order to provide for a proper place for daily domestic worship for his own family as well as for the families of the missionaries who were living close by. While laying the foundation thereof, he made each of the apostles lay a brick and mortar. He himself spent his last failing strength in coming to it in its damp incomplete condition in spite of expostulations, and offering his last public prayer there at its Consecration Ceremony on the 1st January, 1884. Translated in English it stands thus:—

"I have come, O Mother, into Thy sanctuary. They all forbade me but I have somehow just succeeded to bring myself here. Mother, Thou holdest this place and reignest here. This is Thy

*Devalaya.* *Namah Sachchidananda Hari!* This day, the first of January 1884, the 18th Paus, in Thy holy presence, and in the presence of Thy devotees, here as well as in heaven, O Thou Spirit Mother, this new *Devalaya* is consecrated. Thou knowest, O Supreme Mother, that the number of *Bhaktas* who came from distant parts to enjoy Thy festivals on previous occasions was so great that I could not make room for them in my house. Hence it was always my wish to put up a few bricks, and to build a new sanctuary to Thee. To fulfil that desire Thou hast now built this place of worship with Thine own hands for the sanctification of my family, of this neighbourhood, this city and the whole world. This place where I worship my Mother is my Brindawan, my Kashi, my Mecca, my Jerusalem. Bless, O Mother, that Thy devotees may worship Thee here, behold Thy loving face, and find peace after misery of disunion with Thee. Dear brethern, will you not worship my Mother with the flower of *Bhakti*? I have seen that this flower of love offered even by the most humble of Her children is so highly prized by Her, that She carries it to Baikuntha, and invites all Her *Bhaktas* there to come and see it. Ye know not, O brethren, how anxious the Mother is to receive your offerings, and what great care she taketh to store up for you in the world to come Her most sacred treasures. Accept, dear brethren, this infinitely Loving Mother, and ever rejoice in Her. If you worship my Mother and realize Her presence, there can be no more sin and weakness, sorrow and affliction.

My Mother is my health and prosperity, my peace and beauty, my life and immortality. I am happy amidst the agonies of my disease in the presence of my Mother, and may this my happiness be yours also. I will not speak more, because I fear they will rebuke me if I do."

Keshub was decidedly the worse for this effort and the exposure it involved. It helped to hasten the end. Within a week's time every one knew that he must pass away soon, and a few hours before his death, his beloved singing Apostle Trailokya Nath Sanyal sang the last hymn that Keshub heard, the hymn which brought him into fellowship with Christ in His Passion:—

"If it be possible, O Lord of life, remove this cup,

Yet not mine, but Thy will be done—even amidst this awful sorrow."

On January 8th, Keshub Chunder Sen breathed his last. That even death could not rob him of his greatness is evident from the state in which it left him, a state of which Mr. Moozomdar furnishes an accurate description from the lips of others, he himself not having been an eye-witness owing to his absence from India.

'Not a muscle' he writes 'was strained, not a feature was rigid, not a mark of the prolonged struggle remained behind. But as the faithful watchers still gazed on that placid countenance, and the great household burst out into an uproar of grief, behold the lustre of an unearthly smile stole over the majestic features! The face had not lost, but gained fulness from the touch of

death. It was not a smile so much, as the light of joy which fathers all smiling. It was the approaching light of the full-orbed moon behind mountain solitudes, it was the identical expression of profound happiness which illuminated his whole countenance when his communion with God was deepest. Every one remembered it so well. What brought it back when life was extinct? It seemed to be the bond of identity between time and eternity, the blessedness of union between life and immortality, the afterglow of the ascended spirit as it entered into its glorious repose. They marvelled at it."

It was thus that this man of God, so unique in modern India passed away. It was with universal sorrow that the news of Keshub's death was received all over the country. It was no wonder that thousands, forgetting all distinctions of caste, creed and colour, joined his funeral procession, which was perhaps the largest so far seen in Calcutta, and that wires and letters of condolence poured in from all parts of India, and even beyond, from Queen Victoria herself as well as from the commonest man. Memorial meetings were held in many places, and universal expression was given to the opinion that in him India had lost its greatest man. The 'Hindu Patriot', edited by Christo Das Pal, rightly voiced the feeling of the whole country by heading an eulogistic article on him by the words:—"A Prince and a great man has fallen". Max Muller viewing his life in a larger perspective put his deep and delicate appreciation in the following words:—

"India has lost her greatest son, Keshub Chunder Sen.....If we look around for true



greatness, not only in England or Europe, but in the whole civilized world, and if we try to measure such greatness, not by mere success or popularity, but honestly and so to say historically, taking into account the character of the work done and the spirit in which it was done, few, I believe, would deny that it was given to Keshub Chunder Sen to perform one of the greatest works in our generation, and that he performed it nobly and well. Like all great men, he had warm friends and bitter enemies. He himself was proud of both and though fully aware of the greatness of the work committed to him, and quite conscious of his own worth and dignity, he far more frequently protested against exaggerated praise than against unmerited blame. No doubt the controversy between his followers and opponents will continue long after his death, nor is it likely that posterity will be more forbearing to his weakness than it has lately proved itself to be in the case of other religious reformers such as Wyclif or Luther. But if we deduct an equal share on both sides, on the side of exaggerated praise as well as on the side of unmerited blame, there remains a sufficient amount of independent contemporary judgment to secure to Keshub Chunder Sen the first place among his fellow-countrymen, and a pre-eminent place among the best of mankind.....

“Of late Keshub Chunder Sen’s devotion to Christ seemed excessive to many of his friends in India and Europe. If he had lived in the first century he would have been the most loving disciple of the founder of our religion; living in

the nineteenth, though he was more truly a Christian than hundreds or thousands who call themselves Christians, yet he would not join our ranks, but set himself the higher and harder task which he called the task of "Christianizing Christianity".....But as long as there is a religion in India, whatever its name may be, the name of Keshub Chunder Sen will be gratefully remembered as one who lived and died for the glory of God, for the welfare of mankind, and for the truth, so far as he could see it."

"The Indian Empire," representing the more cultured and anglicised Hindu community, wrote the following among other things :—

"In him the Hindu community has lost the ablest and foremost of its well-wishers: in him the Christian world has lost the most uncompromising advocate and admirer of Christ's Christianity and an unsparing enemy of the present mutilation of His divine precepts and teachings. The political aspirant will miss the person who dived deep into the question of India's political advancement, and who exerted unceasingly to shorten the gulf that separates the various nationalities living in this vast country."

Of all these, one of the most correct, discriminating, well-balanced and even prophetic appreciation was that of "The Indian Daily News," an English paper of Calcutta, given in the following words :—

"Though young in years Babu Keshub Chunder Sen had almost from his youth occupied the

place of a great leader of thought among the natives. His position was unique, because the doctrines he preached seemed to be progressive in their nature, and to aim at developing a new system, specially Indian in its characteristics. Keshub Chunder Sen's work is not likely to be fully appreciated in this century: but when men shall look back after a generation or two for the causes of great movements in thought and religion,—movements affecting probably the Indian Christianity of that day in a degree only less than they affect its Hinduism, it will probably be that no figure will occupy so large a space as that of the man who has just gone home to his rest. This is not the place to discuss the peculiar system inaugurated by Keshub Chunder Sen. We have only to-day to express our own sorrow and we doubt not the sorrow of our readers, at the early passing away of a man who was a great man, because inspite of many peculiarities and some mistakes, he was a strong influence in that awakening, political and religious, which is fast coming upon India. Keshub Chunder Sen will stand as an orator in the front rank with men like Gladstone, Bright and Gambetta, except that his influence and oratory were devoted to religion and culture of the heart, instead of to politics and statecraft. Few Englishmen of any age had a more thorough command of the subtler resources of the English tongue. He could sound the depths of metaphysics, and whilst commanding wonder and admiration at the power of his fancy, and the vigour and richness of his imagination, he could

also at will unlock the closest gates of feeling.....  
..He drew to himself a powerful body of teachers,  
men of great mental power and singular eloquence,  
and to these he has bequeathed the task of  
gathering in the crop he himself sowed so  
abundantly....."

These are only a few of the judgments passed by  
Keshub's contemporaries upon him though they are  
some of the most typical. That which has been passed  
on him by some of the most thoughtful men of the  
world during the last forty years, has not only con-  
firmed what has been said so far, but has even added  
to the lustre of his great name and fame.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### SOME LITTLE CONSTRUCTIVE APPRECIATION.

During the last decade or so, there has been a revival of interest in the life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen among a few of the most thoughtful in India and abroad, and some notable pronouncements have been made concerning him here and elsewhere. The Rev. Dr. Cheyne, one of the editors of 'The Encyclopedia Biblica,' writing in his last book published shortly before his death in 1915 and bearing the significant title 'Reconciliation of Races and Religions,' used the following words with regard to Keshub and Baha' Ullah, the great Persian teacher of the Bahai movement:—

"The greatest religious teachers and reformers who have appeared in recent times are (if I am not much mistaken) Baha' Ullah, the Persian, and Keshub Chunder Sen, the Indian. The one began by being a reformer of the Mohammedan Society or Church, the other by acting in the same capacity for the Indian Community and more especially for the Brahma Samaj, a very imperfect and loosely organised religious Society or Church founded by Ram Mohan Roy. By a natural evolution the objects of both the reformers were enlarged: both became founders of world-churches, though circumstances prevented the extension of the Brotherhood of the New Dispensation beyond the limits of India. In both cases a doubt has arisen in the minds of some spectators whether the reformers have anything to offer which has not already been given by the Hebrew prophets and by

the finest efflorescence of these—Jesus Christ. I am bound to express the opinion that they have. Just as the author of the Fourth Gospel looks forward to the results of the Dispensation of the Spirit which will outdo those of the ministry of Jesus, so we may confidently look forward to disclosures of truth and of depths upon depths of character which will far surpass anything that could, in the nearer or further East, have been imagined before the time of Baha'Ullah. I do not say that Baha' Ullah is unique or that his revelations are final. There will be other Messiahs after him, nor is the race of the prophets extinct. The supposition of finality is treason to the ever active, ever creative spirit of truth. But till we have already entered upon a new æon, we shall have to look back in a special degree to the prophets who introduced our own æon, Baha'Ullah and Keshub Chunder Sen, whose common object is the spiritual unification of all peoples. For it is plain that this union of peoples can only be obtained through the influence of prophetic personages, those of the past as well as those of the present."

This is indeed an appreciation which deserves most close and careful attention from all those who would like to study the meaning of the life and teachings of Keshub Chunder Sen, and at the same time would like to know and understand the Age upon which we are entering. The greatest problem of the world to-day and in the immediate future and possibly for a long time to come is the problem of the reconciliation of races and religions, and the work of any man will have

to be judged by the positive contribution he makes towards a real solution of this problem of problems. Judged from that standpoint Keshub Chunder Sen can not but stand as one of the very greatest men of modern times. It was quite in the fitness of things, therefore, that the Rev. J. T. Sunderland, one of the leaders of the Unitarians in America, in the course of an article in 'The Modern Review' some years ago, spoke of Keshub Chunder Sen as 'the greatest personality of the second half of the 19th century,' all over the world. To come nearer home, Sir Nil Ratan Sarkar, in the course of his Presidential Address in the Theistic Conference of the year 1915, an address remarkable from many points of view, speaks of Keshub Chunder Sen as follows:—

“ He was the type of the supreme creative artist in the sphere of religious life.....He would coin into flesh and blood as it were, the religious ideas that have been held in solution in all religious and ecclesiastical history. To mention a few of these,—the great man doctrine, the doctrine of the Logos and the Son of God, the Christocentric community of prophets, the pilgrimage to the Saints, the communion of all souls, the church invisible, the church as the organ of the corporate religious life, the apostolic durbar, the doctrine of special inspiration (*adesh*), the sacraments of the new baptism and the new *Homa*, a new Samhita, sacramental code, a new flag or emblem, an All-India Theistic Mission, the revival of Sankirtan, God-vision and madness in religion, the synthesis of *Yoga* and *Bhakti* as disciplines, the scriptures of life (*Jeevan Veda*), the social

reform propaganda, and the Marriage Act. These were his amazingly prolific constructions, but the most luminous of all was his vision of Harmony of all Religions and Dispensations, which will remain one of the beacon lights of future religious history."

This appreciation is the more remarkable in as much as it was uttered by a very prominent member of the Sadharana Samaj, that branch of the Brahma Samaj which was organised in opposition to Keshub, and which in his own life-time and for years after remained intensely antagonistic to him. Time has brought about this revolution as Keshub himself predicted, and to-day a number of people in the Sadharana Samaj look upon him as *the* representative man of the Brahma Samaj. But it is not in the Brahma Samaj only that Keshub Chunder Sen is looked upon as the ideal man of that community. Such a shrewd observer as Bipin Chunder Pal, who was himself once a member of the Brahma Samaj but who later on became more of a Vaishnav believer, told the present writer in the year 1915 that if Keshub Chunder Sen had lived only two or three years longer he would have attained to the supreme beatitude of character of the Vaishnavs. Such a judgment with regard to Keshub is not a new thing, for in his own life-time he was looked upon by no less a man than Ramkrishna Paramhansa, who had a most penetrating vision with regard to the worth of a man's character, as the Janak—the great philosopher-king, the ideal man for all Hindus—of modern times. When Keshub went to England as early as 1870, he created the impression on such men as Dr. Martineau, the great Unitarian leader, and Max Muller, men who would not be carried away by the



enthusiasm of the moment, of being a second John, the beloved disciple of Christ, or another Luther. This was true all through his life. Keshub was frequently described as an ideal Acharya or an ideal Apostle by Hindus and Christians respectively. He himself refers to such descriptions in the following note in his paper 'All things to all men' :—

" Like St. Paul we are all things to all men. At least we wish to be so. The New Dispensation is Christian to the Christians, while it is Hindu to the Hindus. To the west it is western: to the east, eastern. This Pauline or many-sided character is not our own invention, but is given by the Lord that it may draw all hearts and all nations unto Him. It is no arbitrary imitation, no servile change of colours, no sordid policy of compromise or conciliation, but an essential many-sidedness, a natural eclecticism, which must adapt its outward forms differently according to the temper of the age and the traditions of the people to whom it is presented. There is a catholicity inherent in the present Dispensation, which to the Jews must be Jew and unto the Gentiles Gentile. We have never called ourselves Christians, nor do we identify ourselves with the Hindus. Nay, we disclaim both these names. Yet we are regarded by the Christians as "almost a Christian," and unto the Hindus we are but as Hindus.....".

This 'Pauline character' went deeper than being all things to all men,' and it was no less than an identity of Mission. Keshub himself was fully conscious of this fact and had called himself and his brother-apostles 'modern Pauls' in his lecture 'We Apostles of the New Dispensation.' Of all men it

was St. Paul to whom he came nearest and with whom he had the closest spiritual affinity. It is this likeness to Paul in his love for Christ and work for the spread of His Gospel in India, which explains much in Keshub's life and supplies the key to his teachings. It was, indeed, an intuition born of love for the great Apostle of the Gentiles that made an Englishman, Mr. Ferrar Fenton, write the following to Keshub: 'I beg to present to you a copy of my Translation of St. Paul's Epistles into modern English in the shape of his letter to the Romans. I do this as I regard you as the most perfect reproduction of that great man and evangelist that the world has seen since his death. He adapted Christianity to the Western intellect, and you have adapted it to the Hindoo and so to the Oriental of modern times.' There is no exaggeration in this statement of Mr. Fenton, and the truth of it has been corroborated from more than one quarter. Many passages have already been quoted to show how near to Christ Keshub came, but one more may be added in which he carefully sums up most of what he had said before. It is a small article with the title 'Christ and Keshub Chunder Sen' and reads as follows:—

"Rather sensational heading! Yet stumble not, reader, but read on. Jesus Christ came to the world to save sinners. He had no other object in view. Keshub Chunder Sen is also anxious that the world should be freed from error and sin and regenerated in righteousness. Christ preached the Kingdom of Heaven as the ideal of perfection and the final destination of progressive humanity. Keshub too is trying humbly and prayerfully to establish the holy Kingdom of Heaven in India.

Christ demanded absolute self-abnegation and asceticism. Keshub too tries to make men give up all worldliness and carnality, and take no thought whatever for the morrow. Christ laid great stress on the virtue of forgiveness, and preached the highest doctrine of love, the love of enemies. That most exalted ethics Keshub preaches to his countrymen. In water-baptism, said Christ, is the type of spiritual purification, and in bread-eating the type of spiritual assimilation of godly life. So says Keshub to the Hindus. Christ had no other creed than this—Love God and love thy neighbour. Keshub too recognises no other creed, and always preaches that simple and sweet gospel. Christ did not proclaim the whole truth, but left it to the Holy Ghost to lead men to all truth. Keshub also magnifies the Holy Spirit as the Living Guru that teaches all truth, and supplements and perfects the teaching of Christ. Salvation, according to Christ, is not mere emancipation from the bondage of sin, but partaking of the divine nature. And what else does Keshub preach as the highest *mukti* but the eternal *yoga* of the human and the divine? Christ said, Be perfect even as God which is in heaven is perfect, and he would have men acknowledge no lower aim of life. Keshub's theology too ignores all lower standards of earthly excellence, and condemns all manner of compromise and half-reform. Christ announced his mission to be not to destroy but to fulfil the older dispensation and perfect it. So is Keshub, not an enemy or destroyer of the previous

dispensations of God, but a friend who seeks to fulfil them and carry them out to their ultimate logical sequence. Christ preached faith and hope and heaven to the vilest sinner in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Keshub has no other gospel to preach than this parable, which is the essence of all scripture. Christ spoke of himself as the Son of God and declared himself as the universal and eternal atonement of sinful humanity with the Holy Father. Keshub also believes thoroughly in Christ's sonship and reconciliation, and bears witness unto this truth. Christ said, I am the way. So art thou, O Jesus, says Keshub. I am the bread of life and shall be eaten by my disciple, that I may become flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood, says Christ. And Keshub, the loyal disciple of the Lord Jesus, lives in Christ Jesus, grows in his strength and rejoices in his joy, and verily Keshub's flesh is Christ's flesh through faith and his blood the blood of Christ. Christ said truly, wherever my disciples and servants are there am I always, and wherever I am there they shall be. So where Yesudas Keshub is there is the blessed Yesu, and where Yesu is there is and shall ever be his faithful servant Yesudas. Jesus loves the poor sinner, pities him, regenerates him and dwells in him, and he in him, and they both dwell together in the Father. So in Yesudas is Yesu and in Yesu is Yesudas living in secret *yoga* and intercommunion, and both they, good master and vile servant, are one in the Father, Happy, happy, happy, am I, says Servant Sen, and thrice-blessed is my master Jesus."

Keshub had written and spoken so much of Christ during his life, and there was such a steady progress in his thoughts concerning Christ towards orthodox Christianity, that it was no wonder that in the year 1900 Max Muller should have asked Pratap Chunder Moozomdar, the foremost disciple of Keshub who shared with him all his Christo-centric ideals, as is evident from his well known book "The Oriental Christ", to adopt the 'Christian' name and to organize a national Church of Christ with the church of Keshub Chunder Sen as its nucleus. Max Muller was not alone in thinking that this would be the true line of development of Keshub's thought. In the Bramha Samaj itself there was at that time a group of young men who agreed with him. The same Christo-centric tendencies and utterances of Keshub led the late Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya of Swadeshi and Sandhya fame, who was once a member of the Church of the New Dispensation and who subsequently joined first the Anglican and finally the Roman Catholic Church, to say that if Keshub Chunder Sen had lived a few years longer, he would have joined the Church of Rome. Max Muller's standpoint was Protestant, and hence he thought that Keshub's final position would have been that of the reformed Christian Church. These views are not so irreconcilable as they appear. Keshub in his last lecture approached the orthodox Christian standpoint so closely that it required but one more step to carry him within the bounds of the Nicene creed, which is accepted by all sections of the Christian Church. It is the firm belief of the present writer and even of some men in the Brahma Samaj to-day that that step is the logical outcome of Keshub's teaching, but whether he

himself would have taken it or not is a difficult matter to settle.

Short of this one step, Keshub's position was "Protestant in principle and Catholic in practice," and it is this which lies behind such statements as were made by Max Muller and Brahma Bandhav Upadhyaya. It has been already seen how firmly Keshub stood for the right of individual interpretation claimed by every Protestant and how he wanted to engraft on it the right of individual inspiration. This inclined him on the one hand to Rationalism from the leaven of which he was not entirely free to the last day of his life; and on the other hand to the position of the Montanists with whom he had much in common, particularly with regard to his belief in the inspiration and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Hence it was not without reason that Rev. Joseph Cook called him a "Unitarian Quaker in a Hindu dress." As for his affinity to Roman Catholicism, it lay in his ritualistic tendencies which grew stronger towards the close of his life, and in his deep culture of the ideas of the Motherhood of God and of the Communion of Saints, both of which formed special features of the last phase of his spiritual life.

Possibly Keshub looked upon himself in the light of a John the Baptist for India, and upon his work as preparatory to the advent of the true Kingdom of Heaven. As early as 1866 he wrote to Moozomdar immediately after his lecture 'Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia', that he would not give to India all his ideas on Christ until he found that the fulness of time had come. In accordance with this purpose he held his peace with regard to Christ for nearly thirteen years,

only breaking his silence while he was in England in the year, 1870. Nearly a decade later on June 30, 1881, he wrote as follows in a note entitled 'John the Baptist's Self-denial':—

"We are apt to believe that bodily torture is the highest form of self-sacrifice and the most meritorious act before God and man. But no saint ever suffered greater mortification than did John the Baptist. Let us quote St. Francis de Sales, (Letter to Madame de Chantal) to whom we are indebted for the excellent idea:—"St. John the Baptist went into the desert when he was five years old, and when there he knew that our Saviour and his was born within reach of a day's journey or so. Doubtless he who leapt in his mother's womb for joy and love of that Saviour's expected Birth, must have longed to enter His Earthly Presence. Yet he remained twenty-five years in the desert, without coming to see our Lord, continuing his work of preaching till his Lord should come to him, and even then after baptising Christ, St. John did not follow Him, but remained at his appointed work. Surely this was a truly mortified spirit! To be so near the Saviour and not to rejoice in His Presence! What is that but to have a spirit wholly detached from self, and even from God, when He demands it for better service? To leave God for God: not to love Him in order to love Him better, and with greater purity. I am overwhelmed with the magnitude of such an example!" So are we to leave God for God. Yes: often is the true devotee constrained to sacrifice his devotion and joy and love on the altar

of hard and austere duty. At such times we must yield to God's will, and renounce our Father that we may have more of Him. Ponder on this great truth."

It is not unlikely that in these few short sentences Keshub intended to summarise his deliberate attitude towards Christ and His Kingdom, or that he looked upon himself as one who came to prepare the path before the King of Heaven came with His Kingdom. And if he thought so, who shall say that he did not do his work in a most fitting and remarkable manner? Few men in modern times have done so much as Keshub by way of 'filling up the valleys and bringing low every mountain and hill and thus making the path straight,' if we understand by these words the removing of those barriers which have stood for ages between man and man and divided mankind into castes and communities of particular colours and creeds. Thus from the Christian standpoint we see in the composite character of Keshub Chunder Sen the lineaments of both St. Paul and John the Baptist, and find him doing in India the work of both.

With regard to his relationship to Hinduism, it must be said that the genius of the Hindu race, the chief characteristics of which are spirituality and catholicity, manifested itself at its highest in him in modern times. Of course, the form which this manifestation took in him was more of a general than particular kind. It was not its particular though constitutive tenets and beliefs, such as Re-incarnation and Karma, but its general and formative instincts and tendencies, such as *yoga* and *bhakti*, which lie behind



its vaguer forms of belief such as pantheism and polytheism or its systematized creeds such as Vedantism and Vaishnavism, instincts and tendencies which it shares with the whole of humanity though perhaps in a larger measure, that took hold of him and supplied him with those large and original moulds of thought and feeling into which he cast his glowing Christian experience. To express in the shortest way possible the relationship of these two religions as they stood in his mind, it may be said that while Hinduism served as the 'form', Christianity served as the 'content': to make it still more clear, it may be said that while Hinduism was the mother, Christianity was the father. What he said with regard to India being 'decked in all her jewellery—those "sparkling orient gems" for which this land is famous, so that at the time of the wedding we may find her a really happy and glorious bride,' worthy of the bridegroom Jesus Christ, may be said with greater truth of Hinduism and the Hindu culture as it stood related to Christ in his mind. Harmony and union of these two religions, Hinduism and Christianity, was the life-long passion of his soul, the one great idea for which he lived and died, thus literally fulfilling his own definition of a great man as he gave it in his lecture on 'Great Men,' that 'the peculiar destiny of every great man is to live and die for one idea.' It was this which led him to seek harmony between England and India, between the East and the West, and made him the Apostle of Harmony *par excellence* of modern times. Few men in these days have been given so great a work to do, and consequently among his contemporaries Keshub stands pre-eminent. The only other man in the nineteenth century who

came near Keshub in the breadth of his vision was the great German poet Goethe, who is called the Apostle of Culture, but with this difference, which is no small one, that what was largely intellectual in the great poet became in Keshub entirely spiritual. Prophetic in the truest sense of the term, taking the word 'prophet' in its Greek meaning, which is according to one scholar, 'the out-speaker: he who speaks out the counsel of God with the clearness, energy and authority which spring from the consciousness of speaking in God's name, and having received a direct message from him to deliver,' he was catholic in a unique manner, and with this catholicity of his he has indeed expanded and enlarged the religious sphere of man. This he did with the grand idea of the fulfilment of Hinduism in Christ Jesus, and as the idea grew in him, he became its poet-priest, a Brahmarshi, a sort of finished representative of the genius of Hinduism, which has found its best expression in the Rishis of the Vedic and the Vedantic period, the sages and seers who wrote the Upanishads and the Samhitas and the Puranas, and the philosophers and the *acharyas* of the later period when were written the great commentaries and when the soul of Hinduism was cast into new moulds by the great men of the medieval ages such as Shankaracharya and Ramanuja. Keshub's spiritual affinity is as much with these as with the great eclectic *Bhaktas* of the Hindu-Moslem period like Kabir and Nanak, who were none the less representative of the Hindu soul for pursuing a path which ran midway between these two faiths. Keshub followed the same path still further in our days when the advent of Christianity in India has brought in a

New Age. He is the prophetic type of this Age that has already dawned upon India and Asia, and the immense possibilities of which are only just beginning to be faintly realized. What is said of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the great man who came as a herald of this New Yuga, by his English biographer, is still more true of Keshub. She says: 'He was a genuine outgrowth of the old Hindu stock:...no merely occidentalized oriental, no Hindu polished into the doubtful semblance of a European. If we follow the right line of his development we shall find that he leads the way from the orientalism of the past, not to, but through Western culture, towards a civilization which is neither Western nor Eastern, but something vastly larger than both.....We stand on the eve of an unprecedented intermingling of East and West. The European and Asiatic streams of human development, which have often tinged each other before, are now approaching a confluence which bids fair to form the one ocean-river of the collective progress of mankind.....The nearing dawn of these unmeasured possibilities only throws into clearer prominence the figure of the man whose life-story we have told. He was, if not the prophetic type, at least the precursive hint, of the change that is to come.'

Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub can be no more separated from one another than the seed can be separated from the fruit and what was 'the precursive hint' in Ram Mohan Roy has expanded into 'the prophetic type' in Keshub. One of the possibilities, and it is one of its greatest, of the New Age that has dawned, is the Oriental Church and more particularly the Hindu Church of Christ that has already begun to

rise. Great scholars and sages of the West have said that it is only when the spiritual heritage of the Hindu race, this ancient and most intensely religious race, is brought into the Kingdom of Christ that that Kingdom will reveal its richest treasures of Truth. The hope that this was sure to be in the near future was inspired by the presence and work of Keshub, who laboured in the spirit of both St. Paul and John the Baptist and called himself a 'Hindu disciple' and even a 'Hindu Apostle of Christ.' A host of people since his time, among both Europeans and Indians, are working towards this grand consummation, and their number is increasing from day to day. Of these new men of the New Age, who will be neither of the East nor of the West, but who will seek a true union of both and everything else in Christ Jesus, Keshub is the pioneer and the prophet, and the Apostolic *Acharya*.



